

SERMONS.

ON

SEVERAL OCCASIONS:

IN

FOUR VOLUMES.

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By JOHN WESLEY, M. A.  
Late Fellow of LINCOLN-COLLEGE, OXFORD.

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VOL. III.
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THE FIFTH EDITION.
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S E R M O N S

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By JOHN WATSON, M.A.

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S E R M O N XXXII.

DISCOURSE the THIRTEENTH upon our
LORD'S SERMON on the MOUNT.

MATT. VII. 21—27.

- " Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven: but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven.
- " Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? And in thy name have cast out devils? And in thy name have done many wonderful works?
- " And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity.
- " Therefore, whosoever heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them, I will liken him unto a wise man, which built his house upon a rock:
- " And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell not: for it was founded upon a rock.
- " And every one that heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them not, shall be likened unto a foolish man, which built his house upon the sand:
- " And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell, and great was the fall of it."

1. **O**UR divine Teacher having declared the whole counsel of God, with regard to the way of salvation, and observed the chief hinderances

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of those who desire to walk therein : now closes the whole with these weighty words ; thereby as it were setting his seal to his prophecy, and impressing his whole authority on what he had delivered, that it might stand firm to all generations.

2. For thus saith the Lord, that none may ever conceive, there is any other way than this, “ Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven. Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name ? And in thy name have cast out devils ? And in thy name done many wonderful works ? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you : depart from me ye that work iniquity. Therefore every one that heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them not, shall be likened unto a foolish man which built his house upon the sand : And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house ; and it fell, and great was the fall of it.”

3. I design in the following discourse, First, to consider the case of him, who thus builds his house upon the sand : Secondly, To shew the wisdom of him who builds upon a rock : And thirdly, To conclude with a practical Application.

I. 1. And, first, I am to consider the case of him who builds his house upon the sand. It is concerning him our Lord saith, “ Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven.” And this is a decree which cannot pass ; which standeth fast for ever and ever. It therefore imports us in the highest degree, throughly to understand the force of these words. Now what are we to understand by that expression, “ That saith unto me, Lord, Lord ? ” It undoubtedly means, “ that thinks of going to heaven by any other way than that which I have now described.” It therefore implies, (to begin at the lowest point) all good words, all verbal religion.

religion. It includes, whatever creeds we may rehearse, whatever professions of faith we make: whatever number of prayers we may repeat, whatever thanksgivings we read or say to God. We may speak good of his name; and declare his loving-kindness to the children of men. We may be talking of all his mighty acts, and telling of his Salvation from day to day. By comparing spiritual things with spiritual, we may shew the meaning of the oracles of God. We may explain the mysteries of his kingdom, which have been hid from the beginning of the world. We may speak with the tongue of angels rather than men, concerning the deep things of God. We may proclaim to sinners, "Behold the lamb of God, who taketh away the sin of the world." Yea, we may do this with such a measure of the power of God, and such demonstration of his Spirit, as to save many souls from death, and hide a multitude of sins. And yet it is very possible, all this may be no more than saying, *Lord, Lord*. After I have thus successfully preached to others, still I myself may be a cast-away. I may in the hand of God, snatch many souls from hell, and yet drop into it, when I have done. I may bring many others to the kingdom of heaven, and yet myself never enter there. Reader, if God hath ever blest my word to *thy* soul, pray that he may be merciful to *me* a sinner!

2. The saying, *Lord, Lord!* may, secondly, imply, The doing no harm. We may abstain from every presumptuous sin, from every kind of outward wickedness. We may refrain from all those ways of acting or speaking, which are forbidden in holy Writ. We may be able to say to all those among whom we live, Which of you convinceth me of sin? We may have a conscience void of any external offence, towards God and towards man. We may be clear of all uncleanness, ungodliness and unrighteousness, as to the out-

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ward act: or (as the Apostle testifies concerning himself *touching the righteousness of the law*, i. e. outward righteousness, *blameless*. But yet we are not hereby justified. Still this is no more than saying, *Lord, Lord!* And if we go no farther than this, we shall never enter into the kingdom of heaven.

3. The saying, *Lord, Lord!* may imply, thirdly, Many of what are usually stiled Good Works. A man may attend the supper of the Lord, may hear abundance of excellent sermons, and omit no opportunity of partaking all the other ordinances of God. I may do good to my neighbour, deal my bread to the hungry, and cover the naked with a garment. I may be so zealous of good works, as even to *give all my goods to feed the poor*. Yea, and I may do all this, with a desire to please God, and a real belief that I do please him thereby: (which is undeniably the case of those our Lord introduces, *saying unto him, Lord, Lord!*) and still I may have no part, in the glory which shall be revealed.

4. If any man marvels at this, let him acknowledge he is a stranger to the whole Religion of Jesus Christ: and in particular, to that perfect portraiture thereof, which he has set before us in this discourse. For how far short is all this, of that righteousness and true holiness, which he has described therein? How widely distant from that inward kingdom of heaven, which is now opened in the believing soul? Which is first sown in the heart as a grain of mustard-seed, but afterwards putteth forth great branches, on which grow all the fruits of righteousness, every good temper and word and work.

5. Yet as clearly as he had declared this, as frequently as had repeated, That none who have not this kingdom of God, within them, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven: our Lord well knew, that many would not receive this saying, and

therefore confirms it yet again: *Many* (saith he; not one; not a few only: it is not a rare or an uncommon case) *shall say unto me in that day: not only, We have said many prayers; we have spoken thy praise; we have refrained from evil; we have exercised ourselves in doing good: but what is abundantly more than this, "We have prophesied in thy name. In thy name have we cast out devils; in thy name done many wonderful works."* *We have prophesied: we have declared thy will to mankind; we have shewed finners the way to peace and glory. And we have done this, in thy name, according to the truth of thy gospel. Yea, and by thy authority, who didst confirm the word, with the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven. For in or by thy name, by the power of thy word and of thy spirit, have we cast out devils; out of the souls which they had long claimed as their own, and whereof they had full and quiet possession. And in thy name, by thy power, not our own, have we done many wonderful works: infomuch that even the dead heard the voice of the Son of God speaking by us, and lived. And then will I profess even unto them, I never knew you: no, not then, when you were casting out devils in my name. Even then I did not know you as my own: for your heart was not right toward God. Ye were not yourselves meek and lowly, ye were not lovers of God and of all mankind: ye were not renewed in the image of God. Ye were not holy as I am holy. Depart from me, ye who notwithstanding all this, are workers of iniquity; ἀνομία. Ye are transgressors of my law, my law of holy and perfect love.*

6. It is to put this beyond all possibility of contradiction, that our Lord confirms it by that apposite comparison. "Every one, saith he, who heareth these sayings of mine and doeth them not, shall be likened unto a foolish man, which built his house upon the sand. And the rain descended, and

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and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house :” as they will surely do, sooner or later upon every soul of man : even the floods of outward affliction, or inward temptation ; the storms of pride, anger, fear or desire. *And it fell, and great was the fall of it :* so that it perished for ever and ever. Such must be the portion of all, who rest in any thing short of that Religion, which is above described. And the *greater* will their *fall* be, because they *heard those sayings, and yet did them not.*

II. 1. I am, secondly, To shew the wisdom of him that doeth them, that “ buildeth his house upon a rock.” He indeed is wise, “ who doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven.” He is truly wise, whose “ righteousness exceeds the righteousness of the scribes and pharisees.” He is poor in spirit ; knowing himself even as also he is known. He sees and feels all his sin, and all his guilt, till it is washed away by the atoning blood. He is conscious of his lost estate, of the wrath of God abiding on him, and of his utter inability to help himself, till he is filled with peace and joy in the Holy Ghost. He is meek and gentle, patient toward all men, never “ returning evil for evil, or railing for railing, but contrariwise blessing,” till he overcomes evil with good. His soul is athirst for nothing on earth, but only for God, the living God. He has bowels of love for all mankind, and is ready to lay down his life for his enemies. He loves the Lord his God with all his heart, and with all his mind, and soul, and strength. He alone shall enter into the kingdom of heaven, who in this spirit doth good unto all men ; and who being for this cause despised and rejected of men : being hated, reproached and persecuted, *rejoices and is exceeding glad*, knowing in whom he hath believed ; and being assured, these light, momentary

Thirteenth Discourse on the Mount. 9

tary afflictions, will "work out for him an eternal weight of glory."

2. How truly wise is that man! He knows himself: an everlasting spirit, which came forth from God, and was sent down into an house of clay, not to do his own will, but the will of him that sent him. He knows the world: the place in which he is to pass a few days or years, not as an inhabitant, but as a stranger and sojourner, in his way to the everlasting habitations: and accordingly he uses the world, as not abusing it, and as knowing the fashion of it passes away. He knows God, his father and his friend, the parent of all good, the center of the spirits of all flesh, the sole happiness of all intelligent beings. He sees, clearer than the light of the noon-day sun, that this is the end of man, To glorify Him who made him for himself, and to love and enjoy him for ever. And with equal clearness he sees the means to that end, to the enjoyment of God in glory, even now to know, to love, to imitate God, and to believe in Jesus Christ whom he hath sent.

3. He is a wise man, even in God's account; for "he buildeth his house upon a rock:" upon the Rock of Ages, the everlasting Rock, the Lord Jesus Christ. Fitly is he so called; for he changeth not. He is "the same yesterday, to-day and for ever." To him, both the man of God of old, and the Apostle citing his words, bear witness, "Thou, Lord, in the beginning hast laid the foundation of the earth, and the heavens are the works of thine hands. They shall perish; but thou remainest: and they all shall wax old as doth a garment: And as a vesture shalt thou fold them up, and they shall be changed: but thou art the same, and thy years shall not fail," Heb. i. 10, 11, 12. Wise therefore is the man who buildeth on him; who layeth him for his only foundation; who builds only upon his blood and righteousness, upon what he hath done and suffered for us. On this Corner-stone he fixes
his

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his faith, and rests the whole weight of his soul upon it. He is taught of God to say, Lord, I have sinned: I deserve the nethermost hell. But I am "justified freely by thy grace, through the redemption that is in Jesus Christ. And the life I now live, I live by faith in him, who loved me and gave himself for me." *The life I now live:* namely a divine heavenly life; a life, which is *hid with Christ in God*. I now live even in the flesh, a life of love, of pure love both to God and man: a life of holiness and happiness, praising God and doing all things to his glory.

4. Yet let not such an one think, That he shall not see war any more, that he is now out of the reach of temptation. It still remains, for God to prove the grace he hath given: he shall be tried as gold in the fire. He shall be tempted not less, than they who know not God: perhaps abundantly more. For Satan will not fail to try to the uttermost those whom he is not able to destroy: accordingly, *the rain will impetuously descend*: only at such times and in such a manner, as seems good, not to the Prince of the power of the air, but to Him *whose kingdom ruleth over all*. *The floods, or torrents, will come*; they will lift up their waves and rage horribly. But to them also, the Lord that sitteth above the water-floods, that remaineth a King for ever, will say, "Hitherto shall ye come and no farther: here shall your proud waves be stayed." "The winds will blow and beat upon that house," as though they would tear it up from the foundation. But they cannot prevail: it falleth not; for it is founded upon a Rock. He buildeth on Christ by faith and love; therefore he shall not be cast down. He "shall not fear though the earth be moved and though the hills be carried into the midst of the sea. Though the waters thereof rage and swell, and the mountains shake at the tempest of the same: still he dwelleth under the defence

defence of the most High, and is safe under the shadow of the Almighty."

III. 1. How nearly then does it concern every child of man, practically to apply these things to himself? Diligently to examine, on what foundation he builds, whether on a rock or on the sand? How deeply are *you* concerned to enquire, What is the foundation of *my* hope? Whereon do I build my expectation of entering into the kingdom of heaven? Is it not built on the sand? Upon my *orthodoxy* or right opinions, (which by a gross abuse of words I have called *faith*!) Upon my having a set of notions (suppose more rational or scriptural than many others have.) Alas! What madness is this? Surely this is building on the sand: or rather on the froth of the sea! Say, I am convinced of this. Am I not again building my hope on what is equally unable to support it? Perhaps on my belonging to "so excellent a Church: reformed after the true scripture-model: blest with the purest doctrine, the most primitive liturgy, the most Apostolical form of government!" These are doubtless so many reasons for praising God, as they may be so many helps to holiness. But they are not holiness itself. And if they are separate from it, they will profit me nothing. Nay, they will leave me the more without excuse, and exposed to the greater damnation. Therefore if I build my hope upon this foundation, I am still building upon the sand.

2. You cannot, you dare not rest here. Upon what next will you build your hope of salvation? Upon your innocence? Upon your doing no harm? Your not wronging or hurting any one? Well; allow this plea to be true. You are just in all your dealings: you are a downright honest man. You pay every man his own: you neither cheat, nor extort: you act fairly with all mankind. And you have a conscience towards God: you do not live
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in any known sin. Thus far is well. But still it is not the thing. You may go thus far, and yet never come to heaven. When all this harmlessness flows from a right principle, it is the *least part* of the Religion of Christ. But in you it does not flow from a right principle, and therefore is no part at all of Religion. So that in grounding your hope of salvation on this, you are still building upon the sand.

3. Do you go farther yet? Do you add to the doing no harm, the attending all the ordinances of God? Do you at all opportunities partake of the Lord's supper? Use public and private prayer? Fast often? Hear and search the Scriptures, and meditate thereon? These things likewise ought you to have done, from the time you first set your face towards heaven. Yet these things also are nothing, being alone. They are nothing without the weightier matters of the law. And those you have forgotten. At least you experience them not; faith, mercy, and the love of God: holiness of heart: heaven opened in the soul. Still therefore you build upon the sand.

4. Over and above all this, are you zealous of good works? Do you, as you have time, do good to all men? Do you feed the hungry and clothe the naked, and visit the fatherless and widow in their affliction? Do you visit those that are sick? Relieve them that are in prison? Is any a stranger, and do you take him in? Friend, come up higher. Do you *prophecy in the name of Christ*? Do you preach the truth as it is in Jesus? And does the influence of his Spirit attend your word, and make it the power of God unto salvation? Does he enable you to bring sinners from darkness to light, from the power of Satan unto God? Then go and learn what thou hast so often taught, "By grace ye are saved through faith. Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but of his own mercy he saveth us." Learn to hang naked upon the cross

cross of Christ, counting all thou hast done but dung and dross. Apply to him just in the spirit of the dying thief, of the harlot with her seven devils. Else thou art still on the sand, and after saving others, thou wilt lose thy own soul.

5. Lord! increase my faith, if I now believe! Else, give me faith, though but as a grain of mustard-seed!—But “what doth it profit, if a man say he hath faith, and have not works? Can that faith save him?” O no! That faith which hath not works, which doth not produce both inward and outward holiness, which does not stamp the whole image of God on the heart, and purify us as he is pure: that faith which does not produce the whole of the Religion described in the foregoing chapters, is not the faith of the gospel, not the Christian faith, not the faith which leads to glory. O beware of this, above all other snares of the devil, of resting on unholy, unsaving faith! If thou layest stress on this, thou art lost for ever: thou still buildest thy house upon the sand. When “the rain descends and the floods come, it will surely fall, and great will be the fall of it.”

6. Now therefore, build thou upon a rock. By the grace of God, know thyself. Know and feel, that thou wast shapen in wickedness, and in sin did thy mother conceive thee: and yet thou thyself hast been heaping sin upon sin, ever since thou couldst discern good from evil. Own thyself guilty of eternal death: and renounce all hope of ever being able to save thyself. Be it all thy hope, to be washed in his blood, and purified by his Spirit, “who himself bore all thy sins, in his own body upon the tree.” And if thou knowest he hath taken away thy sins, so much the more abase thyself before him, in a continued sense of thy total dependence on him for every good thought and word and work, and of thy utter inability to all good, unless he water thee every moment.

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7. Now weep for thy sins, and mourn after God till he turns your heaviness into joy. And even then weep with them that weep: and for them that weep not for themselves. Mourn for the sins and miseries of mankind: and see, but just before your eyes, the immense ocean of eternity, without a bottom or a shore; which has already swallowed up millions of millions of men, and is gaping to devour them that yet remain. See here, the house of God eternal in the heavens; there, hell and destruction without a covering. And hence learn the importance of every moment, which just appears, and is gone for ever!

8. Now add to your seriousness, meekness of wisdom. Hold an even scale as to all your passions, but in particular, as to anger, sorrow and fear. Calmly acquiesce in whatsoever is the will of God. Learn in every state wherein you are, therewith to be content. Be mild to the good: be gentle toward all men; but especially toward the evil and the unthankful. Beware not only of outward expressions of anger, such as calling thy brother, *Raca*, or thou fool! But of every inward emotion contrary to love, though it go no farther than the heart. Be angry at sin, at an affront offered to the Majesty of heaven; but love the sinner still: like our Lord, who "looked round about upon the Pharisees with anger, being grieved for the hardness of their hearts." He was grieved at the sinners, angry at the sin. Thus *be thou angry and sin not.*

9. Now do thou hunger and thirst, not for "the meat that perisheth, but for that which endureth unto everlasting life." Trample under foot the world and the things of the world: all these riches, honours, pleasures. What is the world to thee? Let the dead bury their dead: but follow thou after the image of God. And beware of quenching that blessed thirst, if it is already excited in thy soul, by what is vulgarly called Religion, a poor, dull farce,

farce, a Religion of form, of outside show, which leaves the heart still cleaving to the dust, as earthly and sensual as ever. Let nothing satisfy thee but the power of godliness, but a Religion that is spirit and life; the dwelling in God and God in thee; the being an inhabitant of eternity; the entering in by the blood of sprinkling "within the veil, and sitting in heavenly places with Christ Jesus."

10. Now seeing thou canst do all things through Christ strengthening thee, be merciful as thy Father in heaven is merciful. Love thy neighbour as thyself. Love friends and enemies as thy own soul. And let thy love be *long suffering* and patient towards all men. Let it be *kind*, soft, benign: inspiring thee with the most amiable sweetness, and the most fervent and tender affection. Let it *rejoice in the truth*, wheresoever it is found, the truth that is after godliness. Enjoy whatsoever brings glory to God, and promotes peace and good-will among men. In love *cover all things*, of the dead and the absent speaking nothing but good: *believe all things*, which may any way tend to clear your neighbour's character; *hope all things*, in his favour, and *endure all things*, triumphing over all opposition. For, true love never faileth, in time or eternity.

11. Now be thou *pure in heart*; purified thro' faith from every unholy affection, "cleansing thyself from all filthiness of flesh and spirit, and perfecting holiness in the fear of God." Being thro' the power of his grace purified from pride by deep poverty of spirit; from anger, from every unkind or turbulent passion, by meekness and mercifulness; from every desire but to please and enjoy God, by hunger and thirst after righteousness; now love the Lord thy God with all thy heart and with all thy strength.

12. In a word. Let thy Religion be the Religion of the heart. Let it lie deep in thy inmost

soul. Be thou little and base, and mean and vile, (beyond what words can express) in thy own eyes; amazed and humbled to the dust, by the love of God which is in Christ Jesus. Be serious. Let the whole stream of thy thoughts, words and actions flow from the deepest conviction, that thou standest on the edge of the great gulph, thou and all the children of men, just ready to drop in, either into everlasting glory or everlasting burnings. Let thy soul be filled with mildness, gentleness, patience, long-suffering towards all men: at the same time that all which is in thee is athirst for God, the living God; longing to awake up after his likeness, and to be satisfied with it. Be thou a lover of God and of all mankind. In this spirit do and suffer all things. Thus shew thy faith by thy works: thus "do the will of thy Father which is in heaven." And as sure as thou now walketh with God on earth, thou shalt also reign with him in glory.

S E R M O N XXXIII.

THE ORIGINAL, NATURE, PROPERTIES,
AND USE OF THE LAW.

ROMANS VII. 12.

"Wherefore the law is holy, and the commandment holy, and just, and good."

1. **P**ERHAPS there are few subjects within the whole compass of Religion, so little understood as this. The reader of this epistle is usually told, by *the law* St. Paul means the *Jewish law*: and so apprehending himself to have no concern therewith, passes on without farther thought about it. Indeed some are not satisfied with this account: but

but observing the epistle is directed to the Romans, thence infer, that the Apostle in the beginning of this chapter, alludes to the old *Roman law*. But as they have no more concern with this, than with the *ceremonial law* of *Moses*, so they spend not much thought, on what they suppose is occasionally mentioned, barely to illustrate another thing.

2. But a careful observer of the Apostle's discourse, will not be content with these slight explanations of it. And the more he weighs the words, the more convinced he will be, that St. Paul by *the law* mentioned in this chapter, does not mean either the ancient law of Rome, or the ceremonial law of Moses. This will clearly appear to all who attentively consider the tenor of his discourse. He begins the chapter, "Know ye not, brethren (for I speak to them that know the law," to them who have been instructed therein from their youth) "that the law hath dominion over a man, as long as he liveth?" ver. 1. (What the law of *Rome* only, or the *ceremonial* law? No surely; but the Moral Law) "for," to give a plain instance, "the woman that hath an husband, is bound by the (moral) law to her husband as long as he liveth. But if her husband be dead, she is loosed from the law of her husband, ver. 2. So then, if while her husband liveth, she be married to another man, she shall be called an adulteress: but if her husband be dead, she is free from that law, so that she is no adulteress, though she be married to another man," ver. 3. From this particular instance the Apostle proceeds to draw that general conclusion. "Wherefore, my brethren," by a plain parity of reason, "ye also are become dead to the law," the whole Mosaic Institution, "by the body of Christ," offered for you, and bringing you under a new dispensation: "that ye should" [without any blame] "be married to another, even to him who is raised from the dead," and hath thereby given proof of his authority to make the change, "that ye should

bring forth fruit unto God," ver. 4. And this we can do now, whereas before we could not: "for when we were in the flesh, under the power of the flesh, that is, of corrupt nature, (which was necessarily the case till we knew the power of Christ's resurrection) "the motions of sins, which were by the law," which were shewn and inflamed by the Mosaic law, not conquered, "did work in our members," broke out various ways, "to bring forth fruit unto death, ver. 5. But now we are delivered from the law," from that whole moral as well as ceremonial œconomy: "that being dead whereby we were held:" that entire institution being now as it were dead, and having no more authority over us, than the husband when dead hath over his wife: "that we should serve him," who died for us and rose again, "in newness of spirit," in a new spiritual dispensation, "and not in the oldness of the letter," ver. 6. With a bare outward service, according to the letter of the Mosaic institution.

3. The Apostle having gone thus far, in proving that the Christian had set aside the Jewish dispensation, and the moral law itself, though it could never pass away, yet it stood on a different foundation from what it did before, now stops to propose and answer an objection, "What shall we say then? Is the law sin?" So some might infer from a misapprehension of those words, "the motions of sin which were by the law." "God forbid!" saith the Apostle, that we should say so. Nay, the law is an irreconcilable enemy to sin; searching it out wherever it is. "I had not known sin but by the law. I had not known lust," evil desire to be sin, "except the law had said, Thou shalt not covet," ver. 7. After opening this farther in the four following verses, he subjoins this general conclusion, with regard more especially to the moral law, from which the preceding instance was taken: "Wherefore

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fore the law is holy, and the commandment holy,
and just, and good."

4. In order to explain and enforce these deep words, so little regarded, because so little understood, I shall endeavour to shew, First, The original of this law: Secondly, The nature thereof; Thirdly, The properties, that it is *holy, and just, and good*: And Fourthly, The uses of it.

I. 1. I shall, first, endeavour to shew the original of the moral law, often called *the law*, by way of eminence. Now this is not, as some may have possibly imagined, of so late an institution as the time of Moses. Noah declared it to men long before that time, and Enoch before him. But we may trace its original higher still, even beyond the foundation of the world, to that period, unknown indeed to men, but doubtless enrolled in the annals of eternity, when *the morning stars first sang together*, being newly called into existence. It pleased the great Creator to make these his first born sons, intelligent beings, that they might know him that created them. For this end he endued them with understanding, to discern truth from falsehood, good from evil: and as a necessary result of this, with liberty, a capacity of chusing the one and refusing the other. By this they were likewise enabled to offer him a free and willing service: a service rewardable in itself, as well as most acceptable to their gracious Master.

2. To employ all the faculties which he had given them, particularly their understanding and liberty, he gave them a law, a compleat model of all truth, so far as was intelligible to a finite being, and of all good, so far as angelic minds were capable of embracing it. It was also the design of their beneficent Governor herein, to make way for a continual increase of their happiness: seeing every instance of obedience to that law, would both add to the perfection of their nature, and
entitle

entitled them to an higher reward, which the righteous Judge would give in its season.

3. In like manner, when God in his appointed time, had created a new order of intelligent beings, when he had raised man from the dust of the earth, breathing into him the breath of life, and caused him to become a living soul, endued with power to chuse good or evil: he gave to this free, intelligent creature, the same law as to his first-born children: not wrote indeed upon tables of stone, or any corruptible substance, but engraven on his heart by the finger of God, wrote in the inmost spirit both of men and of angels: to the intent it might never be afar off, never hard to be understood; but always at hand, and always shining with clear light, even as the sun in the midst of heaven.

4. Such was the original of the law of God. With regard to man, it was co-eval with his nature. But with regard to the elder sons of God, it shone in its full splendor, "or ever the mountains were brought forth, or the earth and the round world were made." But it was, not long before man rebelled against God, and by breaking this glorious law, well nigh effaced it out of his heart; *the eyes of his understanding being darkened*, in the same measure as his soul was "alienated from the life of God." And yet God did not despise the work of his own hands: but being reconciled to man through the Son of his love, he in some measure re-inscribed his law, on the heart of his dark, sinful creature. *He again shewed thee, O man, what is good* (although not as in the beginning) *even to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God.*

5. And this he shewed not only to our first parents, but likewise to all their posterity, by "that true light which enlightens every man that cometh into the world." But notwithstanding this light, all flesh had in process of time *corrupted their way before him*: till he chose out of mankind a peculiar

liar people, to whom he gave a more perfect knowledge of his law. And the heads of this, because they were slow of understanding, he wrote on two tables of stone; which he commanded the fathers to teach their children, through all succeeding generations.

6. And thus it is, that the law of God is now made known to them that know not God. They hear, with the hearing of the ear, the things that were written aforetime for our instruction. But this does not suffice. They cannot by this means comprehend the height and depth and length and breadth thereof. God alone can reveal this by his Spirit. And so he does to all that truly believe, in consequence of that gracious promise, made to all the Israel of God: "Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel. And this shall be the covenant that I will make, I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts, and I will be their God, and they shall be my people," Jer. xxxi. 31. &c.

II. 1. The nature of that law which was originally given to angels in heaven and man in paradise, and which God has so mercifully promised to write afresh, in the hearts of all true believers, was the second thing I proposed to shew. In order to which I would first observe, That although *the law* and *the commandment* are sometimes differently taken, (the commandment meaning but a part of the law) yet in the text they are used, as equivalent terms, implying one and the same thing. But we cannot understand here, either by one or the other, the ceremonial law, whereof the Apostle says, in the words above recited, "I had not known sin but by the law:" this is too plain to need a proof. Neither is it the ceremonial law which saith, in the words immediately subjoined, "Thou shalt

shalt not covet." Therefore the ceremonial law; has no place in the present question.

2. Neither can we understand by the law mentioned in the text, the Mosaic dispensation. It is true the word is sometimes so understood: as when the Apostle says, speaking to the Galatians, (chap. iii. ver. 17.) "The covenant which was confirmed before (namely with Abraham the father of the faithful) the law, i. e. the Mosaic dispensation, which was four hundred and thirty years after, cannot disannul." But it cannot be so understood in the text; for the Apostle never bestows, so high commendations as these upon that imperfect and shadowy dispensation. He no where affirms, the Mosaic to be a spiritual law: or, that it is *holy and just and good*. Neither is it true, that God will write that law in the hearts of them whose iniquities he remembers no more. It remains, that *the law*, eminently so termed, is no other than the moral law.

3. Now this law is an incorruptible picture of the high and holy One that inhabiteth eternity. It is he whom his essence no man hath seen or can see, made visible to men and angels. It is the face of God unveiled: God manifested to his creatures as they are able to bear it: manifested to give, and not to destroy life; that they may see God and live. It is the heart of God disclosed to man. Yea, in some sense we may apply to this law, what the Apostle says of his Son, it is ἀνάγλας τῆς δόξης, καὶ χαράν τῆς ὑποστάσεως αὐτοῦ. *The streaming forth or out-beaming of his glory, the express image of his person.*

4. "If virtue, said the antient heathen, could assume such a shape as that we could behold her with our eyes, what wonderful love would she excite in us!" If virtue could do this! It is done already. The law of God is all virtues in one, in such a shape, as to be beheld with open face, by all those whose eyes God hath enlightened. What
is

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is the law, but divine virtue and wisdom, assuming a visible form? What is it, but the original ideas of truth and good, which were lodged in the uncreated Mind from eternity, now drawn forth and clothed with such a vehicle, as to appear even to human understanding?

5. If we survey the law of God in another point of view, it is supreme, unchangeable reason: it is unalterable rectitude: it is the everlasting fitness of all things that are or ever were created. I am sensible, what a shortness, and even impropriety there is, in these and all other human expressions; when we endeavour by these faint pictures, to shadow out the deep things of God. Nevertheless we have no better, indeed no other way, during this our infant state of existence. *As we now know but in part, so we are constrained to prophesy, i. e. speak of the things of God, in part also.* "We cannot order our speech by reason of darkness," while we are in this house of clay. While I am *a child*, "I must *speak as a child*. But I shall soon *put away childish things*. For when that which is perfect is come, that which is in part shall be done away."

6. But to return. The law of God, (speaking after the manner of men) is a copy of the eternal Mind, a transcript of the Divine Nature: yea it is the fairest offspring of the everlasting Father, the brightest efflux of his essential wisdom, the visible beauty of the Most High. It is the delight and wonder of cherubim and seraphim and all the company of heaven, and the glory and joy of every wise believer, every well instructed child of God upon earth.

III. 1. Such is the nature of the ever-blessed law of God. I am, in the third place, to shew the properties of it: not all; for that would exceed the wisdom of an angel. But those only which are mentioned

mentioned in the text. These are three: *It is holy, just, and good.* And first, *The law is holy.*

2. In this expression the Apostle does not appear to speak of its effects, but rather of its nature: as St. James speaking of the same thing under another name, says, *The wisdom from above* (which is no other than this law, written in our heart) is *first pure*, chap. iii. 17. *aym*, chaste, spotless, eternally, and essentially holy. And consequently when it is transcribed into the life, as well as the soul, (it is as the same Apostle terms it) chap. 27. *Sproucia nadaga nai apiallos.* *pure religion and undefiled*; or, the pure, clean, unpolluted worship of God.

3. It is indeed, in the highest degree, pure, chaste, clean, holy. Otherwise it could not be the immediate offspring, and much less the express resemblance of God, who is essential holiness. It is pure from all sin, clean and unspotted from any touch of evil. It is a chaste virgin, incapable of any defilement, of any mixture with that which is unclean or unholy. It has no fellowship with sin of any kind. For *what communion hath light with darkness?* As sin is in its very nature enmity to God, so his law is enmity to sin.

4. Therefore it is, that the Apostle rejects with such abhorrence, that blasphemous supposition, that *the law of God is either sin itself, or the cause of sin.* God forbid, that we should suppose, it is the cause of sin, because it is the discoverer of it: because it detects the hidden things of darkness, and drags them out into open day. It is true, by this means, (as the Apostle observes, ver. 13. *Sin appears to be sin.* All its disguises are torn away, and it appears in its native deformity. It is true likewise, that "sin by the commandment becomes exceeding sinful." Being now committed against light and knowledge, being strip even of the poor plea of ignorance, it loses its excuse as well as disguise, and becomes far more odious
both

both to God and man. Yea, and it is true, that "sin worketh death by that which is good," which itself is pure and holy. When it is dragged out to light, it rages the more: when it is restrained, it bursts out with greater violence. Thus the Apostle, (speaking in the person of one, who was convinced of sin, but not yet delivered from it) "sin taking occasion by the commandment," detecting and endeavouring to restrain it, disdained the restraint, and so much the more "wrought in me all manner of concupiscence," ver. 8. All manner of foolish and hurtful desires, which that commandment sought to restrain. Thus "when the commandment came, sin revived," ver. 9. It fretted and raged the more. But this is no stain on the commandment. Though it is abused, it cannot be defiled. This only proves, that "the heart of man is desperately wicked." But *the law of God is holy still.*

5. And it is, secondly, *just.* It renders to all their due. It prescribes exactly what is right, precisely what ought to be done, said or thought, both with regard to the Author of our being, with regard to ourselves, and with regard to every creature which he has made. It is adapted in all respects to the nature of things, of the whole universe and every individual. It is suited to all the circumstances of each, and to all their mutual relations, whether such as have existed from the beginning, or such as commenced in any following period. It is exactly agreeable to the fitnesses of things, whether essential or accidental. It clashes with none of these in any degree; nor is ever unconnected with them. If the word be taken in that sense, there is nothing *arbitrary* in the law of God. Although still the whole and every part thereof, is totally dependent upon his will: so that *thy will be done*, is the supreme universal law both in earth and heaven.

6. "But is the will of God the cause of his law? Is his will the original of right and wrong? Is a thing therefore right, because God wills it? Or does he will it, because it is right?"

I fear, this celebrated question is more curious than useful. And perhaps, in the manner it is usually treated of, it does not so well consist with the regard that is due from a creature, to the Creator and Governor of all things. It is hardly decent for man, to call the supreme God to give an account to him! Nevertheless, with awe and reverence we may speak a little. The Lord pardon us, if we speak amiss!

7. It seems then, that the whole difficulty arises, from considering God's will as distinct from God. Otherwise it vanishes away. For none can doubt, but God is the cause of the law of God. But the will of God is God himself. It is God considered as willing thus or thus. Consequently, to say, That the will of God, or that God himself is the cause of the law, is one and the same thing.

8. Again; if the law, the immutable rule of right and wrong, depends on the nature and fitnesses of things, and on their essential relations to each other: (I do not say, their eternal relations; because the eternal relations of things existing in time, is little less than a contradiction:) if, I say, this depends on the nature and relations of things, then it must depend on God, or the will of God: because those things themselves, with all their relations, are the work of his hands. By his will, *for his pleasure alone, they all are and were created.*

9. And yet it may be granted (which is probably all that a considerate person would contend for) that in every particular case, God wills this or this (suppose that men should honour their parents) because it is right, agreeable to the fitness of things, to the relation wherein they stand.

10. The

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10. The law then is right and just concerning all things. And it is *good* as well as *just*. This we may easily infer from the fountain whence it flowed. For what was this, but the goodness of God? What but goodness alone inclined him to impart that divine copy of himself to the holy angels? To what else can we impute his bestowing upon man the same transcript of his own nature? And what but tender love constrained him afresh to manifest his will to fallen man? Either to Adam, or any of his seed, who like him were *come short of the glory of God*? Was it not mere love that moved him to publish his law, after the understandings of men were darkened? And to send his prophets to declare that law, to the blind, thoughtless children of men? Doubtless his goodness it was which raised up Enoch and Noah, to be Preachers of righteousness; which caused Abraham, his friend, and Isaac and Jacob, to bear witness to his truth. It was his goodness alone, which when *darkness* had *covered the earth, and thick darkness the people*, gave a written law to Moses, and through him to the nation whom he had chosen. — It was his love which explained these living oracles by David and all the Prophets that followed: until, when the fulness of time was come, he sent his only begotten Son, “not to destroy the law, but to fulfil,” to confirm every jot and tittle thereof, till having wrote it in the hearts of all his children, and put all his enemies under his feet, *he shall deliver up his mediatorial kingdom to the Father, that God may be all in all*.

11. And this law which the goodness of God gave at first, and has preserved through all ages, is, like the fountain from whence it springs, full of goodness and benignity: it is mild and kind; it is as the Psalmist expresses it) “sweeter than honey and the honey-comb.” It is winning and amiable. It includes “whatsoever things are lovely or of good report. If there be any virtue, if there be

any praise " before God and his holy angels, they are all comprized in this: wherein are hid all the treasures of the divine wisdom and knowledge and love.

12. And it is good in its effects, as well as in its nature. As the tree is, so are its fruits. The fruits of the law of God written in the heart, are "righteousness and peace and assurance for ever." Or rather, the law itself is righteousness, filling the soul with a peace that passeth all understanding, and causing us to rejoice evermore, in the testimony of a good conscience toward God. It is not so properly a pledge, as "an earnest of our inheritance," being a part of the purchased possession. It is God made manifest in our flesh, and bringing with him eternal life: assuring us by that pure and perfect love, that we are "sealed unto the day of redemption:" that he will "spare us as a man spareth his own son that serveth him, in the day when he maketh up his jewels," and that there remaineth for us "a crown of glory which fadeth not away."

IV. 1. It remains only, to shew, in the fourth and last place, The uses of the law. And the first use of it without question is, to convince the world of sin. This is indeed the peculiar work of the Holy Ghost: who can work it without any means at all, or by whatever means it pleaseth him, however insufficient in themselves, or even improper to produce such an effect. And accordingly some there are whose hearts have been broken in pieces in a moment, either in sickness or in health, without any visible cause, or any outward means whatever. And others (one in an age) have been awakened to a sense of the *wrath of God abiding on them*, by hearing, That "God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself." But it is the ordinary method of the Spirit of God, to convict sinners by the law. It is this, which being
set

set home on the conscience, generally breaketh the rocks in pieces. It is more especially this part of *the word of God*, which is *ζῶν καὶ ἰσχυρὸς*, *quick and powerful*, full of life and energy, and *sharper than any two-edged sword*. This in the hand of God and of those whom he hath sent, pierces thro' all the folds of a deceitful heart, and "divides asunder even the soul and the spirit," yea, as it were, the very "joints and marrow." By this is the sinner discovered to himself. All his fig-leaves are torn away, and he sees that he is "wretched and poor and miserable and blind and naked." The law flashes conviction on every side. He feels himself a mere sinner. He has nothing to pay. His *mouth is stopt*, and he stands *guilty before God*.

2. To slay the sinner is then the first use of the law; to destroy the life and strength wherein he trusts, and convince him that he is dead while he liveth; not only under sentence of death, but actually dead unto God, void of all spiritual life, "dead in trespasses and sins." The second use of it is, to bring him unto life, unto Christ, that he may live. It is true, in performing both these offices, it acts the part of a severe schoolmaster. It drives us by force, rather than draws us by love. And yet love is the spring of all. It is the spirit of love, which by this painful means, tears away our confidence in the flesh, which leaves us no broken reed whereon to trust, and so constrains the sinner, stript of all, to cry out in the bitterness of his soul, or groan in the depth of his heart,

"I give up every plea beside

Lord, I am damn'd---but thou hast died."

3. The third use of the law is, to keep us alive. It is the grand means whereby the blessed Spirit prepares the believer for larger communications of the life of God.

I am afraid this great and important truth is little understood, not only by the world, but even by many whom God hath taken out of the world, who are real children of God by faith. Many of these lay it down as an unquestionable truth, that when we come to Christ, we have done with the law; and that in this sense, "Christ is the end of the law, to every one that believeth." *The end of the law.* So he is, *for righteousness, for justification to every one that believeth.* Herein the law is at an end. It justifies none; but only brings them to Christ. Who is also in another respect, *the end or scope of the law*, the point at which it continually aims. But when it has brought us to him, it has yet a farther office, namely, To keep us with him. For it is continually exciting all believers, the more they see of its height and depth and length and breadth, to exhort one another so much the more.

"Closer and closer let us cleave
To his belov'd embrace;
Expect his fulness to receive,
And grace to answer grace."

4. Allowing then that every believer has done with the law, as it means the Jewish ceremonial law, or the entire Mosaic dispensation (for these *Christ hath taken out of the way.*) Yea, allowing we have done with the moral law, as a means of procuring our justification (for we are "justified freely by his grace, through the redemption that is in Jesus.") Yet in another sense, we have not done with this law. For it is still, of unspeakable use, first, in convincing us of the sin that yet remains both in our hearts and lives, and thereby keeping us close to Christ, that his blood may cleanse us every moment; secondly, in deriving strength from our head into his living members, whereby he impowers them to do what his law commands; and thirdly, in confirming our hope
of

of whatsoever it commands and we have not yet attained, by receiving grace upon grace, till we are in actual possession of the fulness of his promises.

5. How clearly does this agree with the experience of every true believer, while he cries out, "O what love have I unto thy law! all the day long is my study in it;" he sees daily in that divine mirror, more and more of his own sinfulness. He sees more and more clearly, that he is still a sinner in all things; that neither his heart nor his ways are right before God. And that every moment sends him to Christ. This shews him the meaning of what is written, "Thou shalt make a plate of pure gold and grave upon it, Holiness to the Lord. And it shall be upon Aaron's forehead," (the type of our great High Priest) "that Aaron may bear the iniquities of the holy things, which the children of Israel shall hallow, in all their holy gifts:" (so far are our prayers or holy things from atoning for the rest of our sins!) "And it shall be always upon his forehead, that they may be accepted before the Lord," Ex. xxviii. 36, 38.

6. To explain this by a single instance. The law says, "Thou shalt not kill," and hereby (as our Lord teaches) forbids not only outward acts, but every unkind word or thought. Now the more I look into this perfect law, the more I feel how far I come short of it: and the more I feel this, the more I feel my need of his blood to atone for all my sin: and of his Spirit to purify my heart, and make me "perfect and entire, lacking nothing."

7. Therefore I cannot spare the law one moment, no more than I can spare Christ: seeing I now want it as much, to keep me to Christ, as ever I wanted it to bring me to him. Otherwise, this *evil heart of unbelief* would immediately depart from the living God. Indeed each is continually sending me to the other, the law to Christ, and Christ

Christ to the law. On the one hand, the height and depth of the law constrain me to fly to the love of God in Christ. On the other, the love of God in Christ endears the law to me *above gold or precious stones*: seeing I know every part of it, is a gracious promise, which my Lord will fulfil in its season.

8. Who art thou then, O man, that *judgest the law, and speakest evil of the law*? That rankest it with sin, Satan, and death, and sendest them all to hell together! The Apostle James esteemed *judging or speaking evil of the law*, so enormous a piece of wickedness, that he knew not how to aggravate the guilt of judging our Brethren, more than by shewing it included this. *So now*, says he, *thou art not a doer of the law, but a judge!* A judge of that which God hath ordained to judge thee. So thou hast set up thyself in the judgment-seat of Christ, and cast down the rule, whereby he will judge the world! O take knowledge what advantage Satan hath gained over thee! And for the time to come never think or speak lightly of, much less dress up as a scare-crow this blessed instrument of the grace of God. Yea, love and value it for the sake of him from whom it came, and of him to whom it leads. Let it be thy glory and joy, next to the cross of Christ. Declare its praise, and make it honourable before all men.

9. And if thou art thoroughly convinced, That it is the offspring of God, that it is the copy of all his amiable-perfections, and that it is *holy and just and good*, but especially to them that believe: then instead of casting it away as a polluted thing, see that thou cleave to it more and more. Never let the law of mercy and truth, of love to God and man, of lowliness, meekness and purity forsake thee. "Bind it about thy neck: write it on the table of thy heart." Keep close to the law, if thou wilt keep close to Christ: hold it fast! let it not go. Let this continually lead thee to the atoning

ning blood, continually confirm thy hope, till all the righteousness of the law is fulfilled in thee, and thou art filled with all the fulness of God.

10. And if thy Lord hath already fulfilled his word, if he hath already written his law in thy heart, then "stand fast in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made thee free." Thou art not only made free from Jewish ceremonies, from the guilt of sin and the fear of hell: (these are so far from being the whole, that they are the least and lowest part, of Christian liberty :) but what is infinitely more, from the power of sin, from serving the devil, from offending God. O stand fast in this liberty, in comparison of which, all the rest is not even worthy to be named. Stand fast in loving God with all thy heart, and serving him with all thy strength. This is perfect freedom; thus to keep the law, and to walk in all his commandments blameless. "Be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage." I do not mean of Jewish bondage; nor yet of bondage to the fear of hell: these, I trust, are far from thee. But beware of being entangled again with the yoke of sin, of any inward or outward transgression of the law. Abhor sin far more than death or hell; abhor sin itself, far more than the punishment of it. Beware of the bondage of pride, of desire, of anger; of every evil temper or word or work. Look unto Jesus, and in order thereto, look more and more into the perfect law, the law of liberty. And continue therein: so shalt thou daily grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.

S E R M O N XXXIV.

The LAW established through FAITH.

DISCOURSE I.

ROMANS III. 31.

"Do we then make void the law through faith?
God forbid: Yea, we establish the law."

1. **S**T. PAUL having in the beginning of this epistle, laid down his general proposition, namely, That "the gospel of Christ is the power of God unto salvation, to every one that believeth:" the powerful means, whereby God makes every believer a partaker of present and eternal salvation, goes on to shew, that there is no other way under heaven, whereby men can be saved. He speaks particularly of salvation from the guilt of sin, which he commonly terms justification. And that all men stood in need of this, that none could plead their own innocence, he proves at large by various arguments, addressed to the Jews as well as the Heathens. Hence he infers (in the 19th verse of this chapter) *That every mouth, whether of Jew or Heathen, must be stoppt from excusing or justifying himself, "and all the world become guilty before God."* "Therefore," saith he, by his own obedience, "by the works of the law, shall no man be justified in his sight," ver. 20. "But now the righteousness of God without the law," without our previous obedience thereto, "is manifested," ver. 21. "Even the righteousness of God, which is by faith in Jesus Christ, unto all and upon all that believe," ver. 22. "For there is no difference," as to their need of justification,

or

The LAW established thro' FAITH. I. 25
or the manner wherein they attain it. "For all
have sinned and come short of the glory of God,"
(ver. 23.) the glorious image of God wherein they
were created: and all (who attain) "are justified
freely by his grace, through the redemption that is
in Jesus Christ:" ver. 24. "Whom God hath set
forth to be a propitiation, through faith in his
blood—ver. 25. That he might be just, and yet
the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus;" ver.
30. that without any impeachment to his justice,
he might shew him mercy, for the sake of that
propitiation. "Therefore we conclude," (which
was the grand position he had undertaken to esta-
blish) that a man is justified by faith, without the
works of the law," ver. 28.

2. It was easy to foresee an objection which
might be made, and which has in fact been made
in all ages: namely, That to say "we are justified
without the works of the law," is to abolish the
law. The Apostle without entering into a formal
dispute, simply denies the charge. "Do we then,
says he, make void the law through faith? God for-
bid! Yea, we establish the law."

3. The strange imagination of some, that St.
Paul, when he says, "A man is justified without
the works of the law, means only the ceremonial
law, is abundantly confuted by these very words.
For did St. Paul establish the ceremonial law? It
is evident, he did not: He did make void that
law through faith, and openly avowed his doing so.
It was the moral law only of which he might
truly say, We do not make void but establish this
through faith.

4. But all men are not herein of his mind. Many
there are who will not agree to this. Many in
all ages of the Church, even among those who bore
the name of Christians, have contended, That *the*
faith once delivered to the saints, was designed to
make void the whole law. They would no more
spare the moral than the ceremonial law, but were
for

for *hewing*, as it were, *both in pieces before the Lord*: vehemently maintaining, "If you establish any law, *Christ shall profit you nothing: Christ is become of non effect to you: ye are fallen from grace.*"

5. But is the zeal of these men according to knowledge? Have they observed the connection between the law and faith? And that considering that close connection between them, to destroy one is indeed to destroy both? That to abolish the moral law is in truth, to abolish faith and the law together? As leaving no proper means, either of bringing us to faith, or of *stirring up that gift of God in our soul.*

6. It therefore behoves all who desire either to come to Christ, or to *walk in him whom they have received*, to take heed how they *make void the law through faith*; to secure us effectually against which, let us enquire, first, Which are the most usual ways of *making void the law through faith*, and secondly, How we may follow the Apostle, and by *faith establish the law.*

I. 1. Let us, first, enquire, What are the most usual ways of "making void the law through faith." Now the way for a Preacher to make it all void at a stroke, is, not to preach it at all. This is just the same thing, as to blot it out of the Oracles of God. More especially when it is done with design; when it is made a rule, "Not to preach the law:" and the very phrase, "A Preacher of the law," is used as a term of reproach, as though it meant little less than, "an enemy to the gospel."

2. All this proceeds from the deepest ignorance of the nature, properties and use of the law: and proves that those who act thus, either know not Christ, are utter strangers to the living faith: or at least, that they are but babes in Christ, and as such *unskilled in the word of righteousness.*

3. Their grand plea is this: "That preaching the gospel (that is, according to their judgment, the

the speaking of nothing but the sufferings and merits of Christ) answers all the ends of the law." But this we utterly deny. It does not answer the very first end of the law, namely, The convincing men of sin, the awakening those who are still asleep on the brink of hell. There may have been here and there an exempt case. One in a thousand may have been awakened by the gospel. But this is no general rule. The ordinary method of God, is to convict sinners by the law, and that only. The gospel is not the means which God hath ordained, or which our Lord himself used, for this end. We have no authority in Scripture for applying it thus, nor any ground to think it will prove effectual. Nor have we any more ground to expect this, from the nature of the thing. *They that be whole, as our Lord himself observes, need not a Physician, but they that be sick.* It is absurd therefore to offer a Physician to them that are whole, or at least imagine themselves so to be. You are first, to convince them, that they are sick. Otherwise they will not thank you for your labour. It is equally absurd to offer Christ to them, whose heart is whole, having never yet been broken. It is in the proper sense, *casting pearls before swine.* Doubtless *they will trample them under foot.* And it is no more than you have reason to expect, if they also *turn again and rend you.*

4. "But although there is no command in Scripture, to offer Christ to the careless sinner, yet are there not scriptural precedents for it?" I think not any. I believe you cannot produce one, either from the four Evangelists, or the Acts of the Apostles. Neither can you prove this to have been the practice of any of the Apostles, from any passage in all their writings.

5. "Nay, does not the Apostle Paul say, in his former Epistle to the Corinthians, "We preach Christ crucified?" chap. i. ver. 23. And in his

latter, "We preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord?" chap. v. ver. 4."

We consent to rest the cause on this issue: to tread in his steps, to follow his example. Only preach you, just as St. Paul preached, and the dispute is at an end.

For although we are certain he *preached Christ*, in as perfect a manner as the very chief of the Apostles, yet who *preached the law* more than St. Paul? Therefore he did not think the gospel answered the same end.

6. The very first sermon of St. Paul's, which is recorded, concludes in these words. "By him all that believe are justified from all things, from which ye could not be justified by the law of Moses. Beware therefore lest that come upon you which is spoken of in the Prophets, Behold ye despisers and wonder and perish. For I work a work in your days, a work which you will in no wise believe though a man declare it unto you," Acts xiii. 39, &c. Now it is manifest, all this is *preaching the law*, in the sense wherein you understand the term: even although great part of, if not all his hearers, were either *Jews or religious profelytes*, ver. 43, and therefore probably many of them, in some degree at least, convinced of sin already. He first reminds them, That they could not be justified by the law of Moses, but only by faith in Christ: and then severely threatens them with the judgments of God, which is in the strongest sense *preaching the law*.

7. In his next discourse, that to the heathens at Lystra, (chap. xiv. ver. 15, &c.) we do not find so much as the name of Christ. The whole purport of it is, That they should "turn from those vain idols, unto the living God." Now confess the truth. Do not you think, If you had been there, you could have preached much better than he? I should not wonder, if you thought too, That his *preaching so ill*, occasioned his being *so ill*

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ill treated: and that his being *stoned*, was a just judgment upon him, for not *preaching Christ*!

8. To the jaylor indeed, when "he sprang in and came trembling, and fell down before Paul and Silas, and said, Sirs, What must I do to be saved," he immediately said, "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ." (chap. xvi. 29, &c.) And in the case of one so deeply convinced of sin, who would not have said the same? But to the men of Athens you find him speaking in a quite different manner, reproving their superstition, ignorance and idolatry; and strongly moving them to repent, from the consideration of a future judgment, and of the resurrection from the dead, (chapter xvii. verses 24—31) Likewise *when Felix sent for Paul*, on purpose that he might *hear him concerning the faith in Christ*; instead of preaching Christ in your sense (which would probably have caused the Governor either to mock, or to contradict and blaspheme) *he reasoned of righteousness, temperance and judgment to come*, till Felix (hardened as he was) *trembled*, (chap. xxiv. ver. 24. 25.) Go thou and tread *in his steps*. *Preach Christ to the careless sinner, by reasoning of righteousness, temperance and judgment to come!*

9. If you say, "But he *preached Christ* in a different manner in his Epistles." I answer, He did not there preach at all: not in that sense wherein we speak: for preaching in our present question, means, speaking before a congregation.

But waving this. I answer, 2. His Epistles are directed, not to unbelievers, such as those we are now speaking of, but *to the saints of God in Rome, Corinth, Philippi, and other places*. Now unquestionably he would speak more of Christ to these, than to those who were without God in the world. And yet, 3. Every one of these is full of the law, even the Epistles to the Romans and the Galatians: in both of which he does what you

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term preaching the law, and that to believers as well as unbelievers.

10. From hence it is plain, you know not what it is, to *preach Christ*, in the sense of the Apostle. For doubtless St. Paul judged himself to be *preaching Christ*, both to Felix, and at Antioch, Lystra, and Athens. From whose example every thinking man must infer, That not only the declaring the love of Christ to sinners, but also the declaring that he will come from heaven in flaming fire, is, in the Apostle's sense, *preaching Christ*: yea, in the full scriptural meaning of the word. To *preach Christ*, is, To preach what he hath revealed either in the Old or New Testament: so that you are then as really preaching Christ, when you are saying, "The wicked shall be turned into hell, and all the people that forget God," as when you are saying, "Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world!"

11. Consider this well; that to *preach Christ*, is to preach all things that Christ hath spoken; all his promises, all his threatenings and commands; all that is written in his book. And then you will know how to preach Christ, without making void the law.

12. "But does not the greatest blessing attend those discourses, wherein we peculiarly preach the merits and sufferings of Christ?"

Probably, when we preach to a congregation of mourners or believers, these will be attended with the greatest blessing: because such discourses are peculiarly suited to their state. At least, these will usually convey the most comfort. But this is not always the greatest blessing. I may sometimes receive a far greater, by a discourse that cuts me to the heart and humbles me to the dust. Neither should I receive that comfort, if I were to preach or to hear no discourses but on the sufferings of Christ. These by the constant repetition would lose their force and grow more and more flat and dead:

till

till at length they would become a dull round of words, without any spirit or life or virtue. So that thus to *preach Christ*, must in process of time, make void the gospel as well as the law.

II. 1. A second way of *making void the law through faith*, is, the teaching that faith supersedes the necessity of holiness. This divides itself into a thousand smaller paths: and many there are that walk therein. Indeed there are few that wholly escape it: few who are convinced, we *are saved by faith*, but are sooner or later, more or less, drawn aside into this by-way.

2. All those are drawn into this by-way, who if it be not their settled judgment, that faith in Christ entirely sets aside the necessity of keeping his law, yet suppose either, 1. That holiness is less necessary now than it was before Christ: or, 2. That a less degree of it is necessary; or, 3. That it is less necessary to believers than to others. Yea, and so are those, who although their judgment be right in the general, yet think they may take more liberty in particular cases, than they could have done before they believed. Indeed the using the term *liberty*, in such a manner, for "liberty from obedience or holiness," shews at once, that their judgment is perverted, and that they are guilty of what they imagined to be far from them, namely of *making void the law through faith*, by supposing faith to supersede holiness.

3. The first plea of those who teach this expressly, is, that "we are now under the covenant of grace, not works: and therefore we are no longer under the necessity of performing the works of the law."

And who ever was under the covenant of works? None but Adam before the fall. He was fully and properly under that covenant, which required perfect, universal obedience, as the one condition of acceptance; and left no place for pardon, upon the

very least transgression. But no man else was ever under this, neither Jew nor Gentile, neither before Christ nor since. All his sons were and are under the covenant of grace; the manner of their acceptance is this: the free grace of God through the merits of Christ, gives pardon to them that believe, that believe with such a faith as working by love, produces all obedience and holiness.

4. The case is not therefore as you suppose, that men were *once* more obliged to obey God, or to work the works of his law than they are *now*. This is a supposition you cannot make good. But, we should have been obliged, if we had been under the covenant of works, to have done those works antecedent to our acceptance. Whereas now all good works, though as necessary as ever, are not antecedent to our acceptance but consequent upon it. Therefore the nature of the covenant of grace, gives you no ground, no encouragement at all, to set aside any instance or degree of obedience, any part or measure of holiness.

5. "But are we not *justified by faith, without the works of the law?*" Undoubtedly we are, without the works either of the ceremonial or the moral law. And would to God all men were convinced of this. It would prevent innumerable evils. Antinomianism, in particular; for generally speaking, they are the Pharisees who make the Antinomians. Running into an extreme so palpably contrary to Scripture, they occasion others to run into the opposite one. These seeking to be justified by works, affright those from allowing any place for them.

6. But the truth lies between both. We are doubtless *justified by faith*. This is the cornerstone of the whole Christian building. We are *justified without the works of the law*, as any previous condition of justification. But they are an immediate fruit of that faith, whereby we are justified. So that if good works do not follow our faith, even all inward and outward holiness, it
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is plain our faith is nothing worth: we are yet in our sins. Therefore, that *we are justified by faith*, even by *faith without works*, is no ground for *making void the law through faith*: or for imagining that faith is a dispensation, from any kind or degree of holiness.

7. "Nay, but does not St. Paul expressly say, "Unto him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness?" And does it not follow from hence, That faith is to a believer in the room, in the place of righteousness? But if faith is in the room of righteousness or holiness, what need is there of this too?"

This it must be acknowledged, comes home to the point, and is indeed the main pillar of Antinomianism. And yet it needs not a long or laboured answer. We allow, That God *justifies the ungodly*, him that till that hour is totally ungodly, full of all evil, void of all good. 2. That he *justifies the ungodly that worketh not*, that till that moment worketh no good work: neither can he; for an evil tree cannot bring forth good fruit. 3. That he justifies him *by faith alone*, without any goodness or righteousness preceding: and, 4. That *faith* is then counted to him for righteousness, namely, for *preceding righteousness*: i. e. God through the merits of Christ, accepts him that believes as if he had already fulfilled all righteousness. But what is all this to your point? The Apostle does not say, either here or elsewhere, That this faith is counted to him for *subsequent righteousness*. He does teach, That there is no righteousness *before* faith. But where does he teach, That there is none *after* it? He does assert, Holiness cannot *precede* justification: But not, That it need not *follow* it. St. Paul therefore gives you no colour for *making void the law*, by teaching that faith supersedes the necessity of holiness.

III. 1. There

III. 1. There is yet another way of *making void the law through faith*, which is more common than either of the former. And that is, The doing it practically: the making it void in *fact*, though not in *principle*: the *living*, as if faith was designed to excuse us from holiness.

How earnestly does the Apostle guard us against this, in those well-known words: "What then? Shall we sin, because we are not under the law, but under grace?" God *forbid*! Rom. vi. 15. A caution which it is needful thoroughly to consider, because it is of the last importance.

2. The being *under the law* may here mean,
 1. The being obliged to observe the ceremonial law.
 2. The being obliged to conform to the whole Mosaic institution. 3. The being obliged to keep the whole moral law, as the condition of our acceptance with God: and, 4. The being under the wrath and curse of God, under sentence of eternal death; under a sense of guilt and condemnation, full of horror and slavish fear.

3. Now although a believer is "not without law to God, but under the law to Christ," yet from the moment he believes, he is not *under the law*, in any of the preceding senses. On the contrary, he is *under grace*, under a more benign, gracious dispensation. As he is no longer under the ceremonial law, nor under the Mosaic institution; as he is not obliged to keep even the moral law, as the condition of his acceptance: so he is delivered from the wrath and the curse of God, from all sense of guilt and condemnation, and from all that horror and fear of death and hell, whereby he was *all his life* before *subject to bondage*. And he now performs (which while *under the law* he could not do) a willing and universal obedience. He obeys not from the motive of slavish fear, but on a nobler principle, namely, The grace of God, ruling in his heart, and causing all his works to be wrought in love.

4. What then? Shall this evangelical principle of action, be less powerful than the legal? Shall we be less obedient to God from filial love, than we were from fervile fear?

It is well, if this is not a common case; if this practical Antinomianism, this unobserved way of *making void the law through faith*, has not infected thousands of believers.

Has it not infected you? Examine yourself honestly and closely. Do you not do now, what you durst not have done when you was *under the law*, or (as we commonly call it) *under conviction*? For instance. You durst not then indulge yourself in food. You took just what was needful, and that of the cheapest kind. Do you not allow yourself more latitude now? Do you not indulge yourself a *little* more than you did? O beware, lest you *sin*, because you are not under the law, but under grace!

5. When you was under conviction, you durst not indulge the lust of the eye in any degree. You would not do any thing, great or small, merely to gratify your curiosity. You regarded only cleanliness and necessity, or at most very moderate convenience, either in furniture or apparel; superfluity and finery of whatever kind, as well as fashionable elegance, were both a terror and an abomination to you.

Are they so still? Is your conscience as tender now in these things, as it was then? Do you still follow the same rule both in furniture and apparel, trampling all finery, all superfluity, every thing useless, every thing merely ornamental, however fashionable, under foot? Rather, Have you not resumed what you had once laid aside, and what you could not then use without wounding your conscience? And have you not learned to say, "O, I am not so scrupulous now." I would to God you were! Then you would not *sin* thus, "because you are not under the law, but under grace."

6. You

6. You was once scrupulous too of commending any to their face, and still more, of suffering any to commend you. It was a stab to your heart: you could not bear it: you sought the honour that cometh of God only. You could not endure such conversation: nor any conversation which was not good, to the use of edifying. All idle talk, all trifling discourse you abhorred, you hated as well as feared it, being deeply sensible of the value of time, of every precious, fleeting moment. In like manner you dreaded and abhorred idle expence: valuing your money only less than your time, and trembling lest you should be found an unfaithful steward even of the mammon of unrighteousness.

Do you now look upon praise as deadly poison, which you can neither give nor receive but at the peril of your soul? Do you still dread and abhor all conversation, which does not tend to the use of edifying; and labour to improve every moment, that it may not pass without leaving you better than it found you? Are not you less careful as to the expence both of money and time? Cannot you now lay out either, as you could not have done once? Alas! How has that "which should have been for your health, proved to you an occasion of falling?" How have you "sinned because you was not under the law, but under grace!"

7. God forbid you should any longer continue thus to *turn the grace of God into lasciviousness!* O remember, how clear and strong a conviction you once had, concerning all these things. And at the same time you was fully satisfied, from whom that conviction came. The world told you, you was in a delusion: but you knew, it was the voice of God. In these things you was not too scrupulous then; but you are not now scrupulous enough. God kept you longer in that painful school, that you might learn those great lessons the more perfectly. And have you forgot them already? O recollect them, before it is too late. Have you suffered

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ferred so many things in vain? I trust, it is not yet in vain. Now use the conviction without the pain: practise the lesson without the rod. Let not the mercy of God weigh less with you now, than his fiery indignation did before. Is love a less powerful motive than fear? If not, let it be an invariable rule "I will do nothing now I am *under grace*, which I durst not have done when *under the law*."

8. I cannot conclude this head, without exhorting you to examine yourself likewise touching sins of omission. Are you as clear of these, now you are *under grace*, as you was when *under the law*? How diligent was you then in hearing the word of God? Did you neglect any opportunity? Did you not attend thereon day and night? Would a small hinderance have kept you away? A little business? A visitant? A slight indisposition? A soft bed? A dark or cold morning?—Did not you then fast often? Or use abstinence to the utmost of your power? Was not you much in prayer, (cold and heavy as you was) while you was hanging over the mouth of hell? Did you not speak and not spare even for an unknown God? Did you not boldly plead his cause? Reprove sinners? And avow the truth, before an adulterous generation?—And are you now a believer in Christ? Have you the *faith that overcometh the world*? What! and are you less zealous for your Master now, than you was when you knew him not? Less diligent in fasting, in prayer, in hearing his word, in calling sinners to God? O repent. See and feel your grievous loss! Remember from whence you are fallen! Bewail your unfaithfulness! Now be zealous and do the first works; lest if you continue to *make void the law through faith*, God cut you off, and *appoint you your portion with the unbelievers*!

SERMON

SERMON XXXV.

The Law established through FAITH.

DISCOURSE II.

ROMANS III. 31.

“ Do we then make void the law through faith?
God forbid! Yea, we establish the law.”

1. **I**T has been shewn in the preceding Discourse, which are the most usual ways of *making void the law through faith*: namely, First, The not preaching it at all, which effectually makes it all void at a stroke: and this under colour of *preaching Christ* and magnifying the gospel, though it be in truth, destroying both the one and the other: Secondly, The teaching (whether directly or indirectly) that faith supercedes the necessity of holiness: that this is less necessary now, or a less degree of it necessary, than before Christ came: that it is less necessary to us, because we believe, than otherwise it would have been: or that Christian liberty is a liberty from any kind or degree of holiness: (so perverting those great truths, that we are now under the “covenant of grace, and not of works: that a man is justified by faith, without the works of the law; and that to him that worketh not, but believeth, his faith is counted for righteousness:”) Or, Thirdly, The doing this practically; the making void the law in practice, though not in principle: the living or acting, as if faith was designed to excuse us from holiness: the allowing ourselves in sin, “because we are not under the law, but under grace.” It remains to enquire, how we may follow a better pattern, how we may be able to
say

say with the Apostle, "Do we then make void the law through faith? God forbid! Yea, we establish the law."

2. We do not indeed establish the old ceremonial law: we know that is abolished for ever. Much less do we establish the whole Mosaic dispensation. This, we know, our Lord has *nailed to his cross*. Nor yet do we so establish the moral-law (which it is to be feared, too many do) as if the fulfilling it, the keeping all the commandments, were the condition of our justification. 'If it were so, surely "in his sight should no man living, be justified." But all this being allowed, we still in the Apostle's sense, *establish the law*, the moral law.

I. 1. We *establish the law*, First, By our doctrine: by endeavouring to preach it in its whole extent, to explain and enforce every part of it, in the same manner as our great Teacher did, while upon earth. We establish it, by following St. Peter's advice, "If any man speak let him speak as the Oracles of God;" as the holy men of old moved by the Holy Ghost, spoke and wrote for our instruction, and as the Apostles of our blessed Lord, by the direction of the same spirit. We establish it whenever we speak in his name, by keeping back nothing from them that hear; by declaring to them, without any limitation or reserve, the whole counsel of God. And in order the more effectually to establish it, we use herein great plainness of speech. "We are not as many that corrupt the word of God," καπηλεύει. (as artful men their bad wines) we do not cauponize, mix, adulterate or soften it, to make it suit the taste of the hearers. "But as of sincerity, but as of God, in the sight of God, speak we in Christ;" as having no other aim, than "by manifestation of the truth, to commend ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God."

2. We then by our doctrine establish the law, when we thus openly declare it to all men: and that, in the fulness wherein it is delivered by our blessed Lord and his Apostles: when we publish it in the height and depth and length and breadth thereof. We then establish the law, when we declare every part of it, every commandment contained therein, not only in its full literal sense, but likewise in its spiritual meaning: not only with regard to the outward actions, which it either forbids or enjoins: but also with respect to the inward principle, to the thoughts, desires and intents of the heart.

3. And indeed this we do the more diligently, not only because it is of the deepest importance; inasmuch as all the fruit, every word and work, must be only evil continually, if the tree be evil, if the dispositions and tempers of the heart, be not right before God: but likewise, because as important as these things are, they are little considered or understood. So little, that we may truly say of the law too, when taken in its full spiritual meaning, It is "a mystery which was hid from ages and generations since the world began." It was utterly hid from the heathen world. They, with all their boasted wisdom, neither *found out God*, nor the law of God, not in the letter, much less in the Spirit of it. *Their foolish hearts were more and more darkened, while professing themselves wise, they became fools.* And it was almost equally hid, as to its spiritual meaning, from the bulk of the Jewish nation. Even these who were so ready to declare concerning others, *this people that know not the law, is accursed*, pronounced their own sentence therein, as being under the same curse, the same dreadful ignorance. Witness our Lord's continual reproof of the wisest among them, for their gross misinterpretations of it. Witness the supposition almost universally received among them, that they needed only to make clean the outside of the cup: that the

the paying tythe of mint, anise and cummin, outward exactness would atone for inward unholiness; for the total neglect both of justice, and mercy; of faith and the love of God. Yea, so absolutely was the spiritual meaning of the law hidden from the wisest of them, that one of their most eminent Rabbi's comments thus, on those words of the Psalmist, "If I incline unto iniquity with my heart, the Lord will not hear me:" that is, saith he, if it be only in my heart, if I do not commit outward wickedness, the Lord will not regard it; he will not punish me, unless I proceed to the outward act!

4. But alas! The law of God, as to its inward spiritual meaning, is not hid from the Jews or heathens only, but even from what is called the Christian world; at least, from a vast majority of them. The spiritual sense of the commandments of God, is still a mystery to these also. Nor is this observable only in those lands, which are over-spread with Romish darkness and ignorance. But this is too sure, that the far greater part, even of those, who are called *reformed Christians*, are utter strangers at this day to the law of Christ, in the purity and spirituality of it.

5. Hence it is that to this day *the Scribes and Pharisees*, the men who have the form, but not the power of Religion, and who are generally wise in their own eyes, and righteous in their own conceits; *hearing these things are offended*: are deeply offended, when we speak of the Religion of the heart, and particularly when we shew, that without this were we to *give all our goods to feed the poor*, it would profit us nothing. But offended they must be: for we cannot but speak the truth as it is in Jesus. It is our part, whether they will hear or whether they will forbear, to deliver our own soul. All that is written in the Book of God we are to declare, not as pleasing men, but the Lord. We are to declare not only all the promises but all

the threatenings too which we find therein. At the same time that we proclaim all the blessings and privileges, which God had prepared for his children, we are likewise to "teach all the things, whatsoever he hath commanded." And we know, that all these have their use; either for the awakening those that sleep, the instructing the ignorant, the comforting the feeble-minded, or the building up and perfecting of the saints. We know that *all Scripture, given by inspiration of God, is profitable either for doctrine, or for reproof, either for correction or for instruction in righteousness: and that the man of God, in the process of the work of God in his soul, has need of every part thereof, that he "may at length be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works.*

6. It is our part, thus to *preach Christ*, by preaching all things whatsoever he hath revealed. We may indeed without blame, yea, and with a peculiar blessing from God, declare the love of our Lord Jesus Christ. We may speak, in a more especial manner, *of the Lord our Righteousness*. We may expatiate upon the grace of *God in Christ*, "reconciling the world unto himself." We may, at proper opportunities, dwell upon his praise, as "bearing the iniquities of us all, as wounded for our transgressions, and bruised for our iniquities, that by his stripes we might be healed." But still we should not *preach Christ*, according to his word, if we were wholly to confine ourselves to this. We are not ourselves clear before God, unless we proclaim him in all his offices. To *preach Christ*, as a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, is to preach him not only as our great *High-Priest*, "taken from among men, and ordained for men, in things pertaining to God;" as such, "reconciling us to God by his blood," and "ever living to make intercession for us:" but likewise as the Prophet of the Lord, "who of God is made unto us wisdom." Who by his word, and his spirit, is
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with us always; "guiding us into all truth;" yea and as remaining a King for ever; as giving laws to all whom he has bought with his blood: as restoring those to the image of God, whom he had first reinstated in his favour: as reigning in all believing hearts until he has "subdued all things to himself;" until he hath utterly cast out all sin, and "brought in everlasting righteousness."

II. 1. *We establish the law*, Secondly, when we so preach faith in Christ, as not to supersede, but produce holiness: to produce all manner of holiness, negative and positive, of the heart and of the life.

In order to this, we continually declare (what should be frequently and deeply considered, by all who would not *make void the law through faith*) that faith itself, even Christian faith, the faith of God's elect, the faith of the operation of God, still is only the handmaid of love. As glorious and honourable as it is, it is not the end of the commandment. God hath given this honour to love alone: love is the end of all the commandments of God. Love is the end, the sole end of every dispensation of God, from the beginning of the world, to the consummation of all things. And it will endure when heaven and earth flee away; for *love alone never faileth*. Faith will totally fail: it will be swallowed up in sight, the everlasting vision of God. But even then love

"Its nature and its office still the same,
Lasting its lamp and unconsum'd its flame,
In deathless triumph shall for ever live,
And endless good diffuse, and endless praise receive."

2. Very excellent things are spoken of faith, and whosoever is a partaker thereof, may well say with the Apostle, "Thanks be to God, for his unspeakable gift." Yet still it loses all its excellence,

when brought into a comparison with love. What St. Paul observes concerning the superior glory of the gospel, above that of the law, may with great propriety be spoken of the superior glory of love, above that of faith. "Even that which was made glorious, hath no glory in this respect, by reason of the glory that excelleth. For if that which is done away is glorious, much more doth that which remaineth exceed in glory." Yea, all the glory of faith before it is done away, arises hence, that it ministers to love. It is the great temporary means which God has ordained to promote that eternal end.

3. Let those who magnify faith beyond all proportion, so as to swallow up all things else, and who so totally misapprehend the nature of it, as to imagine it stands in the place of love, consider farther, That as love will exist after faith, so it did exist long before it. The angels, who from the moment of their creation, beheld the face of their Father that is in heaven, had no occasion for faith, in its general notion, as it is the evidence of things not seen. Neither had they need of faith, in its more particular acceptation, faith in the blood of Jesus: for he took not upon him the nature of angels; but only the seed of Abraham. There was therefore no place before the foundation of the world, for faith either in the general or particular sense. But there was for love. Love existed from eternity, in God, the great ocean of love. Love had a place in all the children of God, from the moment of their creation. They received at once from their gracious Creator, to exist, and to love.

4. Nor is it certain (as ingeniously and plausibly as many have descanted upon this,) That faith, even in the general sense of the word, had any place in paradise. It is highly probable, from that short and uncircumstantial account which we have in Holy Writ, That Adam before he rebelled against

The LAW established thro' FAITH. II. 55
against God, walked with him by sight and not
by faith.

“ For then his Reason's eye was strong and clear,
And as an eagle can behold the sun,
Might have beheld his Maker's face as near,
As th' intellectual angels could have done.”

He was then able to talk with him face to face,
whose face we cannot now see and live. And
consequently had no need of that faith, whose office
it is, to supply the want of sight.

5. On the other hand, is is absolutely certain,
faith in its particular sense had then no place. For
in that sense it necessarily presupposes sin, and the
wrath of God declared against the sinner; with-
out which there is no need of an atonement for
sin, in order to the sinner's reconciliation with
God. Consequently, as there was no need of an
atonement before the fall, so there was no place
for faith in that atonement. Man being then pure
from every stain of sin, holy as God is holy.
But love even then filled his heart. It reigned in
him without a rival. And it was only when love
was lost by sin, that faith was added, not for its
own sake, nor with any design, that it should exist
any longer, than until it had answered the end for
which it was ordained, namely, To restore man to
the love from which he was fallen. At the fall
therefore was added this evidence of things unseen,
which before was utterly needless: this confidence
in redeeming love, which could not possibly have
any place, till the promise was made, that the seed
of the woman should bruise the serpent's head.

6. Faith then was originally designed of God, to
re-establish the law of love. Therefore in speak-
ing thus, we are not undervaluing it, or robbing it
of its due praise: but on the contrary shewing its
real worth, exalting it in its just proportion, and
giving it that very place which the wisdom of God
assigned it from the beginning. It is the grand
means

means of restoring that holy love, wherein man was originally created. It follows, that although faith is of no value in itself (as neither is any other means whatsoever) yet as it leads to that end, the establishing anew the law of love in our hearts, and as, in the present state of things, it is the only means under heaven for effecting it: it is on that account an unspeakable blessing to man, and of unspeakable value before God.

III. 1. And this naturally brings us to observe, Thirdly, The most important way of *establishing the law*: namely, The establishing it in our own hearts and lives. Indeed without this, what would all the rest avail? We might establish it by our doctrine; we might preach it in its whole extent, might explain and enforce every part of it. We might open it in its most spiritual meaning, and declare the mysteries of the kingdom: we might preach Christ in all his offices, and faith in Christ, as opening all the treasures of his love. And yet all this time, if the law we preached, were not established in our hearts, we should be of no more account before God, than "sounding brags, or tinkling cymbals." All our preaching would be so far from profiting ourselves, that it would only increase our damnation.

2. This is therefore the main point to be considered, How may we establish the law in our own hearts, so that it may have its full influence on our lives? And this can only be done by faith.

Faith alone it is, which effectually answers this end, as we learn from daily experience. For so long as we walk by faith, not by sight, we go swiftly on in the way of holiness. While we steadily look, not at the things which are seen, but at those which are not seen, we are more and more crucified to the world, and the world crucified to us. Let but the eye of the soul be constantly fixed, not on the things which are temporal, but on those which

which are eternal, and our affections are more and more loosened from earth, and fixed on things above. So that faith in general is the most direct and effectual means of promoting all righteousness and true holiness: of establishing the holy and spiritual law, in the hearts of them that believe.

3. And by faith, taken in its more particular meaning, for a confidence in a pardoning God, we establish his law in our own hearts, in a still more effectual manner. For there is no motives which so powerfully incline us to love God, as the sense of the love of God in Christ. Nothing enables us like a piercing conviction of this, to give our hearts to him who was given for us. And from this principle of grateful love to God, arises love to our brother also. Neither can we avoid loving our neighbour, if we truly believe the love where-with God hath loved us. Now this love to man grounded on faith and love to God, *worketh no ill to our neighbour*. Consequently, it is (as the Apostle observes, *(the fulfilling of the whole negative law.*" "For this, Thou shalt not commit adultery, Thou shalt not kill, Thou shalt not steal, Thou shalt not bear false witness, Thou shalt not covet: and if there be any other commandment, it is briefly comprehended in this saying, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself." Neither is love content with barely working no evil to our neighbour. It continually incites us to do good: as we have time, and opportunity, to do good in every possible kind, and in every possible degree to all men. It is therefore the fulfilling of the positive likewise, as well as of the negative law of God.

4. Nor does faith fulfil either the negative or positive law, as to the external part only: but it works inwardly by love, to the purifying of the heart, the cleansing it from all vile affections. "Every one that hath this faith in himself, purifieth himself even as he is pure:" purifieth himself from every earthly, sensual desire, from all vile and inordinate

ordinate affections: yea, from the whole of that carnal mind, which is enmity against God. At the same time, if it have its perfect work, it fills him with all goodness, righteousness and truth. It brings all heaven into his soul, and causes him to walk in the light even as God is in the light.

5. Let us thus endeavour to establish the law in ourselves: not sinning *because we are under grace*, but rather using all the power we receive thereby, *to fulfil all righteousness*. Calling to mind, what light we received from God, while his spirit was convincing us of sin, let us beware we do not put out that light: what we had then attained let us hold fast. Let nothing induce us to build again what we have destroyed; to resume any thing, small or great, which we then clearly saw was not for the glory of God, or the profit of our own soul: or to neglect any thing, small or great, which we could not then neglect, without a check from our own conscience. To increase and perfect the light which we had before, let us now add the light of faith. Confirm we the former gift of God, by a deeper sense of whatever he had then shewn us: by a greater tenderness of conscience, and a more exquisite sensibility of sin. Walking now with joy and not with fear, in a clear, steady sight of things eternal, we shall look on pleasure, wealth, praise, all the things of earth, as on bubbles upon the water: counting nothing important, nothing desirable, nothing worth a deliberate thought, but only what is "within the veil, where Jesus sitteth at the right hand of God."

6. Can you say, "Thou art merciful to my unrighteousness: my sins thou rememberest no more?" Then for the time to come, see that you fly from sin, as from the face of a serpent. For how exceeding sinful does it appear to you now? How heinous above all expression? On the other hand, in how amiable a light do you now see the holy and perfect will of God? Now therefore labour
that

that it may be fulfilled, both in you, by you, and upon you. Now watch and pray that you may sin no more, that you may see and shun the least transgression of his law. You see the motes which you could not see before, as when the sun shines into a dark place. In like manner, you see the sins which you could not see before, now the Sun of Righteousness shines in your heart. Now then do all diligence to walk in every respect, according to the light you have received. Now be zealous to receive more light daily, more of the knowledge and love of God, more of the Spirit of Christ, more of his life, and of the power of his resurrection. Now use all the knowledge, and love, and life, and power you have already attained. So shall you continually go on from faith to faith. So shall you daily increase in holy love, till faith is swallowed up in sight, and the law of love is established to all eternity.

S E R M O N XXXVI.

THE NATURE OF ENTHUSIASM.

ACTS XXVI. 24.

“And Festus said with a loud voice, Paul, Thou art beside thyself.”

1. **A**ND so say all the world, the men who know not God, of all that are of Paul's Religion; of every one who is so a follower of him, as he was of Christ. It is true, there is a sort of Religion, nay and it is called Christianity too, which may be practised without any such imputation, which is generally allowed to be consistent with common sense. That is, a Religion of form,

form, a round of outward duties, performed in a decent, regular manner. You may add orthodoxy thereto, a system of right opinions, yea, and some qualities of heathen morality. And yet not many will pronounce, That *much Religion hath made you mad*. But if you aim at the Religion of the heart, if you talk of righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Ghost, then it will not be long before your sentence is past, *Thou art beside thyself*.

2. And it is no compliment which the men of the world pay you herein. They, for once, mean what they say. They not only affirm, but cordially believe, That every man is *beside himself*, who says, The love of God is shed abroad in his heart, by the Holy Ghost given unto him, and that God has enabled him to rejoice in Christ, with joy unspeakable, and full of glory. If a man is indeed alive to God, and dead to all things here below; if he continually sees him that is invisible, and accordingly walks by faith and not by sight: then they account it a clear case; beyond all dispute, *much Religion hath made him mad*.

3. It is easy to observe, That the determinate thing which the world accounts madness, is that utter contempt of all temporal things, and steady pursuit of things eternal; that divine conviction of things not seen; that rejoicing in the favour of God; that happy, holy love of God; and that testimony of his Spirit with our spirit, that we are the children of God. That is, in truth, the whole spirit, and life, and power of the Religion of Jesus Christ.

4. They will however allow, in other respects, the man acts and talks like one in his senses. In other things, he is a reasonable man; it is in these instances only his head is touched. It is therefore acknowledged, that the madness under which he labours, is of a particular kind. And accordingly they are accustomed to distinguish it by a particular name, *Enthusiasm*.

5. A term

A term this, which is exceeding frequently used, which is scarce ever out of some men's mouths. And yet it is exceeding rarely understood, even by those who use it most. It may be therefore not unacceptable to serious men, to all who desire to understand what they speak or hear, if I endeavour to explain the meaning of this term, to shew what Enthusiasm is. It may be an encouragement to those who are unjustly charged therewith: and may possibly be of use, to some who are justly charged with it, at least to others, who might be so, were they not cautioned against it.

6. As to the word itself, it is generally allowed to be of Greek extraction. But whence the Greek word *ἑνθουσιασμός*, is derived, none has yet been able to shew. Some have endeavoured to derive it from *ἐν Θεῷ*, *in God*, because all Enthusiasm has reference to Him. But this is quite forced: there being small resemblance between the word derived; and those they strive to derive it from. Others would derive it from *ἐν θυσίᾳ*, *in sacrifice*, because many of the Enthusiasts of old, were affected in the most violent manner, during the time of sacrifice. Perhaps it is a fictitious word, invented from the noise, which some of those made who were so affected.

7. It is not improbable, that one reason why this uncouth word has been retained in so many languages, was because men were no better agreed, concerning the meaning than concerning the derivation of it. They therefore adopted the Greek word, because they did not understand it: they did not translate into their own tongues, because they knew not how to translate it: it having been always a word of a loose uncertain sense, to which no determinate meaning was affixed.

8. It is not therefore at all surprising, that it is so variously taken at this day: different persons understanding it in different senses, quite inconsistent with each other. Some take it in a good sense, for a divine impulse or impression, superior to all

the natural faculties, and suspending for the time, either in whole or in part, both the reason and the outward senses. In this meaning of the word, both the Prophets of old, and the Apostles were proper Enthusiasts: being at divers times so filled with the Spirit, and so influenced by Him who dwelt in their hearts, that the exercise of their own reason, their senses, and all their natural faculties being suspended, they were wholly actuated by the power of God, and *spake only as they were moved by the Holy Ghost.*

9. Others take the word in an indifferent sense, such as is neither morally good nor evil. Thus they speak of the Enthusiasm of the Poets; of Homer and Virgil in particular. And this a late eminent Writer extends so far as to assert, there is no man excellent in his profession, whatsoever it be, who has not in his temper a strong tincture of Enthusiasm. By Enthusiasm these appear to understand, an uncommon vigor of thought, a peculiar fervor of spirit, a vivacity and strength not to be found in common men: elevating the soul to greater and higher things, than cool reason could have attained.

10. But neither of these is the sense wherein the word Enthusiasm is most usually understood. The generality of men, if no farther agreed, at least agree thus far concerning it, That it is something evil: and this is plainly the sentiment of all those, who call the Religion of the heart, Enthusiasm. Accordingly I shall take it in the following pages, as an evil; a misfortune, if not a fault.

11. As to the nature of Enthusiasm, it is undoubtedly a disorder of the mind; and such a disorder, as greatly hinders the exercise of reason. Nay, sometimes, it wholly sets it aside: it not only dims, but shuts the eyes of the understanding. It may therefore well be accounted a species of madness; of madness rather than of folly: seeing a fool is properly one who draws wrong conclusions from

from right premises: whereas a madman draws right conclusions, but from wrong premises. And so does an Enthusiast. Suppose his premises true, and his conclusions would necessarily follow. But here lies his mistake, his premises are false. He imagines himself to be what he is not. And therefore setting out wrong, the farther he goes, the more he wanders out of the way.

12. Every Enthusiast then is properly a madman. Yet his is not an ordinary, but a religious madness. By religious, I do not mean, that it is any part of Religion. Quite the reverse: Religion is, the spirit of a sound mind: and consequently stands in direct opposition to madness of every kind. But I mean, it has Religion for its object; it is conversant about Religion. And so the Enthusiast is generally talking of Religion, of God or of the things of God: but talking in such a manner that every reasonable Christian may discern the disorder of his mind. Enthusiasm in general may then be described in some such manner as this: a religious madness arising from some falsely imagined influence or inspiration of God: at least, from imputing something to God which ought not to be imputed to him, or expecting something from God which ought not to be expected from him.

13. There are innumerable sorts of Enthusiasm. Those which are most common and for that reason most dangerous, I shall endeavour to reduce under a few general heads, that they may be more easily understood and avoided.

The first sort of Enthusiasm which I shall mention, is that of those who imagine they have the *grace* which they have not. Thus some imagine, when it is not so, that they have *redemption* through Christ, *even the forgiveness of sin*. These are usually such as *have no root in themselves*; no deep repentance, or thorough conviction. *Therefore they receive the word with joy*. And because they have

no deepness of earth, no deep work in their heart, therefore the seed *immediately springs up*. There is immediately a superficial change, which together with that light joy, striking in with the pride of their unbroken heart, and with their inordinate self-love, easily persuades them, they have already "tasted the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come."

14. This is properly an instance of the first sort of Enthusiasm: it is a kind of madness, arising from the imagination, that they have that grace which in truth they have not: so that they only deceive their own souls. Madness it may justly be termed: for the reasonings of these poor men are right, were their premises good: but as those are a mere creature of their own imagination, so all that is built on them fall to the ground. The foundation of all their reveries is this: They imagine themselves to have faith in Christ. If they had this, they would be *Kings and Priests to God*, possessors of a kingdom which cannot be moved. But they have it not. Consequently, all their following behaviour, is as wide of truth and soberness, as that of the ordinary madman, who fancying himself an earthly King, speaks and acts in that character.

15. There are many other Enthusiasts of this sort. Such, for instance, is the fiery zealot for religion; or (more probably for the opinions and modes of worship, which he dignifies with that name.) This man also strongly imagines himself, to be a believer in Jesus, yea, that he is a champion for the faith, which was once delivered to the saints. Accordingly all his conduct is formed, upon that vain imagination. And allowing his supposition to be just, he would have some tolerable plea for his behaviour: whereas now it is evidently the effect of a distempered brain, as well as of a distempered heart.

16. But

16. But the most common of all the Enthusiasts of this kind, are those who imagine themselves Christians, and are not. These abound not only in all parts of our land, but in most parts of the habitable earth. That they are not Christians is clear and undeniable, if we believe the Oracles of God. For Christians are holy; these are unholy: Christians love God: these love the world. Christians are humble; these are proud: Christians are gentle; these are passionate. Christians have the mind which was in Christ; these are at the utmost distance from it. Consequently, they are no more Christians, than they are archangels. Yet they imagine themselves so to be; and they can give several reasons for it. For they have been *called* so ever since they can remember: they were *christened* many years ago: they embrace the *Christian Opinions*, vulgarly termed, The Christian or Catholic Faith. They use the *Christian modes of worship*, as their fathers did before them. They live what is called a good, *Christian life*, as the rest of their neighbours do. And who shall presume to think or say, that these men are not Christians? Though without one grain of true faith in Christ, or of real, inward holiness! without ever having tasted the love of God, or been *made partakers of the Holy Ghost*!

17. Ah poor self-deceivers! Christians ye are not. But you are Enthusiasts in an high degree. Physicians, heal yourselves. But first, know your disease: your whole life is Enthusiasm; as being all suitable to the imagination, that you have received that grace of God which you have not. In consequence of this grand mistake, you blunder on, day by day speaking and acting under a character, which does in no wise belong to you. Hence arises that palpable glaring inconsistency, that runs through your whole behaviour: which is an awkward mixture of real Heathenism and imaginary Christianity. Yet still, as you have so vast a majority on your side, you will alway carry it by

mere dint of numbers, "That you are the only men in your senses, and all are lunatics who are not as you are." But this alters not the nature of things. In the sight of God and his holy angels, yea, and all the children of God upon earth, you are mere madmen, mere Enthusiasts all. Are you not? Are you not *walking in a vain shadow*, a shadow of Religion, a shadow of happiness? Are you not still *disquieting yourselves in vain*? With misfortunes as imaginary as your happiness on religion? Do you not fancy yourselves great or good? Very knowing, and very wise! How long? Perhaps till death brings you back to your senses; to bewail your folly for ever and ever.

18. A second sort of Enthusiasm, is that of those, who imagine they have such *gifts* from God as they have not. Thus some have imagined themselves to be endued with a power of working miracles, of healing the sick by a word or a touch, of restoring sight to the blind; yea, even of raising the dead, a notorious instance of which is still fresh in our own history. Others have undertaken to prophesy, to foretel things to come, and that with the utmost certainty and exactness. But a little time usually convinces these Enthusiasts. When plain facts run counter to their predictions, experience performs what reason could not, and sinks them down into their senses.

19. To the same class belong those, who in preaching or prayer, imagine themselves to be so influenced by the Spirit of God as in fact they are not. I am sensible indeed, that without him we can do nothing; more especially in our public ministry: that all our preaching is utterly vain, unless it be attended with his power; and all our prayer, unless his Spirit therein help our infirmities. I know, if we do not both preach and pray by the spirit, it is all but lost labour: seeing the help that is done upon earth, he doth it himself, who worketh all in all. But this does not effect the
case

case before us. Though there is a real influence of the Spirit of God, there is also an imaginary one; and many there are who mistake the one for the other. Many suppose themselves to be under that influence, when they are not, when it is far from them. And many others suppose, they are more under that influence than they really are. Of this number, I fear, are all they who imagine, that God dictates the very words they speak: and that consequently, it is impossible they should speak any thing amiss, either as to the matter or manner of it. It is well known, how many Enthusiasts of this sort also, have appeared during the present century: some of whom speak in a far more authoritative manner, than either St. Paul or any of the Apostles.

20. The same sort of Enthusiasm, though in a lower degree, is frequently found in men of a private character. They may likewise imagine themselves to be influenced or directed by the Spirit, when they are not. I allow, "if any man have not the Spirit of Christ he is none of his:" and that if ever we either think, speak, or act aright, it is through the assistance of that blessed Spirit. But how many impute things to him, or expect things from him without any rational or scriptural ground? Such are they who imagine, they either do or shall receive *particular directions* from God, not only in points of importance, but in things of no moment, in the most trifling circumstances of life. Whereas in these cases God has given us our own reason for a guide: though never excluding the secret assistance of his Spirit.

21. To this kind of Enthusiasm they are peculiarly exposed, who expect to be directed of God, either in spiritual things or in common life, in what is justly called, an *extraordinary* manner. I mean, by visions or dreams, by strong impressions or sudden impulses on the mind. I do not deny, that God has of old times manifested his will in
this

this manner. Or, that he can do so now. Nay, I believe, he does, in some very rare instances. But how frequently do men mistake therein? How are they misled by pride and a warm imagination, to ascribe such impulses or impressions, dreams or visions to God, as are utterly unworthy of him? Now this is all pure Enthusiasm, all as wide of Religion, as it is of Truth and Soberness.

22. Perhaps some may ask, "Ought we not then to enquire, What is the will of God in all things? And ought not his will to be the rule of our practice?" Unquestionably it ought. But how is a sober Christian to make this Enquiry? To know, what is the will of God? Not by waiting for supernatural dreams. Not by expecting God to reveal it in visions. Not by looking for any *particular impressions*, or sudden impulses on his mind. No: but by consulting the Oracles of God. "To the law and to the testimony." This is the general method of knowing what is *the holy and acceptable will of God*.

23. "But how shall I know what is the will of God, in such and such a particular case? The thing proposed is in itself of an indifferent nature, and so left undetermined in Scripture." I answer, The Scripture itself gives you a general rule, applicable to all particular cases. "The will of God is our sanctification." It is his will that we should be inwardly and outwardly holy: that we should be good and do good in every kind, and in the highest degree whereof we are capable. Thus far we tread upon firm ground. This is as clear as the shining of the sun. In order therefore to know, what is the will of God in a particular case, we have only to apply this general rule.

24. Suppose, for instance, it were proposed to a reasonable man, to marry, or to enter into a new business: in order to know, whether this is the will of God, being assured, "It is the will of God concerning me, that I shou'd be as holy and do

as much good as I can," he has only to enquire, "In which of these states can I be most holy, and do the most good?" And this is to be determined, partly by reason, and partly by experience. Experience tells him what advantages he has in his present state, either for being or doing good: and Reason is to shew, what he certainly or probably will have in the state proposed. By comparing these, he is to judge, which of the two may most conduce to his being and doing good: and as far as he knows this, so far he is certain, what is the will of God.

25. Mean time, the assistance of his Spirit is supposed, during the whole process of the enquiry. Indeed it is not easy to say, in how many ways, that assistance is conveyed. He may bring many circumstances, may place others in a stronger and clearer light; may insensibly open our mind to receive conviction, and fix that conviction upon our heart. And to a concurrence of many circumstances of this kind, in favour of what is acceptable in his sight, he may superadd such an unutterable peace of mind, and so uncommon a measure of his love, as will leave us no possibility of doubting, that this even this, is his will concerning us.

26. This is the plain scriptural, rational way to know what was the will of God in a particular case. But considering how seldom this way is taken, and what a flood of Enthusiasm must needs break in, on those who endeavour to know the will of God, by unscriptural, irrational ways: it were to be wished, that the expression itself, were far more sparingly used. The using it, as some do, on the most trivial occasions, is a plain breach of the third commandment. It is a gross way of taking the name of God in vain, and betrays great irreverence toward him. Would it not be far better than, to use other expressions, which are not liable to such objections? For example. Instead

stead of saying, on any particular occasion, "I want to know, what is the will of God." Would it not be better to say, "I want to know, what will be most for my improvement: and, what will make me most useful." This way of speaking is clear and unexceptionable. It is putting the matter on a plain, scriptural issue, and that without any danger of Enthusiasm.

27. A third very common sort of Enthusiasm (if it does not coincide with the former) is that of those who think to attain the end without using the means, by the immediate power of God. If indeed those means were providentially withheld, they would not fall under this charge. God can, and sometimes does, in cases of this nature, exert his own immediate power. But they who expect this when they have those means, and will not use them, are proper Enthusiasts. Such are they who expect to understand the holy scriptures, without reading them and meditating thereon: yea, without using all such helps as are in their power, and may probably conduce to that end. Such are they who designedly speak in the public assembly, without any premeditation. I say designedly: because there may be such circumstances, as at some times make it unavoidable. But whoever despises that great means of speaking profitably, is so far an Enthusiast.

28. It may be expected that I should mention what some have accounted, a fourth sort of Enthusiasm, namely, The imagining those things to be owing to the Providence of God, which are not owing thereto. But I doubt. I know not what things they are, which are not owing to the Providence of God: in ordering, or, at least, in governing of which, this is not either directly or remotely concerned. I except nothing but sin: and even in the sins of others, I see the Providence of God to me. I do not say, his *general* Providence; for this I take to be a sounding word, which means
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just nothing. And if there be a *particular* Providence, it must extend to all persons and all things. So our Lord understood it, or he could never have said, "Even the hairs of your head are all numbered." And, "Not a sparrow falleth to the ground, without the will of your Father which is in heaven." But if it be so, if God presides *universis tanquam singulis, et singulis tanquam universis*; over the whole universe as over every single person, over every single person as over the whole universe: what is it (except only our own sins) which we are not to ascribe to the Providence of God? So that I cannot apprehend, there is any room here, for the charge of Enthusiasm.

29. If it be said, The charge lies here: "When you impute *this* to Providence, you imagine yourself the peculiar favourite of heaven." I answer, you have forgot some of the last words I spoke, *presidet universis tanquam singulis*. His Providence is over all men in the universe, as much as over any single person. Do not you see, that he who believing this, imputes any thing which befalls him to Providence, does not therein make himself any more the favourite of heaven, than he supposes every man under heaven to be? Therefore you have no pretence, upon this ground, to charge him with Enthusiasm.

30. Against every sort of this, it behoves us to guard, with the utmost diligence: considering the dreadful effects it has so often produced, and which indeed naturally result from it. Its immediate offspring is pride; it continually increases this source from whence it flows, and hereby it alienates us more and more, from the favour and from the life of God. It dries up the very springs of faith and love; of righteousness and true holiness. Seeing all these flow from grace. But "God resisteth the proud; and giveth grace only to the humble."

31. Together

31. Together with pride there will naturally arise an unadvisable and unconvincible spirit. So that into whatever error or fault the Enthusiast falls, there is small hope of his recovery. For Reason will have little weight with him (as has been frequently and justly observed) who imagines he is led by an higher Guide, by the immediate wisdom of God. And as he grows in pride, so he must grow in unadvisableness and in stubbornness also. He must be less and less capable of being convinced, less susceptible of persuasion; more and more attached to his own judgment and his own will, till he is altogether fixt and immoveable.

32. Being thus fortified against the grace of God, and against all advice and help from man, he is wholly left to the guidance of his own heart, and of the king of the children of pride. No marvel then that he is daily more rooted and grounded in contempt of all mankind, in a furious anger, in every unkind disposition, in every earthly and devilish temper. Neither can we wonder at the terrible outward effects, which have flowed from such dispositions in all ages: even all manner of wickedness, all the works of darkness, committed by those who call themselves Christians, while they wrought with greediness such things, as were hardly named even among the Heathens.

Such is the nature, such the dreadful effects, of that many headed monster Enthusiasm! For the consideration of which we may now draw some plain inferences, with regard to our own practice.

33. And, first, If Enthusiasm be a term, though so frequently used, yet so rarely understood, take you care, not to talk of you know not what, not to use the word, till you understand it. As in all other points, so likewise in this, learn to think before you speak. First, know the meaning of this hard word; and then use it, if need require.

34. But if so few, even among men of education and learning, much more among the common
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sort of men, understand this dark, ambiguous word, or have any fixt notion of what it means: then, secondly, Beware of judging or calling any man an Enthusiast upon common report. This is by no means a sufficient ground, for giving any name of reproach to any man: least of all is it a sufficient ground, for so black a term of reproach as this. The more evil it contains, the more cautious you should be, how you apply it to any one: to bring so heavy an accusation without full proof, being neither consistent with justice nor mercy.

35. But if Enthusiasm be so great an evil, beware you are not entangled therewith yourself. Watch and pray that ye fall not into temptation. It easily besets those who fear or love God. O beware you do not think of yourself more highly than you ought to think. Do not imagine you have attained the grace of God, to which you have not attained. You may have much joy: you may have a measure of love, and yet not have living faith. Cry unto God that he would not suffer you, blind as you are, to go out of the way: that you may never fancy yourself a believer in Christ, till Christ is revealed in you, and till his Spirit witnesses with your spirit, that you are a child of God.

36. Beware you are not a fiery, persecuting Enthusiast. Do not imagine that God has called you, (just contrary to the Spirit of him you stile your Master) to destroy men's lives, and not to save them. Never dream of forcing men into the ways of God. Think yourself, and let think. Use no constraint in matters of Religion. Even those who are farthest out of the way, never compel to come in, by any other means, than reason, truth and love.

37. Beware you do not run with the common herd of Enthusiasts, fancying you are a Christian when you are not. Presume not to assume that venerable name, unless you have a clear, scriptural

title thereto : unless you have the mind which was in Christ, and walk as He also walked.

38. Beware you do not fall into the second sort of Enthusiasm, fancying you have those gifts from God which you have not. Trust not in visions or dreams; in sudden impressions, or strong impulses of any kind. Remember, it is not by these you are to know, what is the will of God on any particular occasion: but by applying the plain scripture-rule, with the help of Experience and Reason, and the ordinary assistance of the Spirit of God. Do not lightly take the name of God in your mouth: do not talk of the will of God on every trifling occasion. But let your words as well as your actions be all tempered with reverence and godly fear.

39. Beware, Lastly, of imagining you shall obtain the end, without using the means conducive to it. God can give the end, without any means at all: but you have no reason to think he will. Therefore constantly and carefully use all these means, which he has appointed to be the ordinary channels of his grace. Use every means which either Reason or Scripture recommend, as conducive (through the free love of God in Christ) either to the obtaining, or increasing any of the gifts of God. Thus expect a daily growth in that pure and holy Religion, which the world always did, and always will call Enthusiasm: but which, to all who are saved from real Enthusiasm, from merely nominal Christianity, is the wisdom of God and the power of God, the glorious image of the Most High: righteousness and peace: a fountain of living water, springing up into everlasting life!

S E R M O N XXXVII.

A CAUTION AGAINST BIGOTRY.

MARK IX. 38, 39.

" And John answered him, saying, Master, we saw one casting out devils in thy name, and we forbade him, because he followeth not us. But Jesus said, Forbid him not."

1. **I**N the preceding verses we read, That after the Twelve had been disputing, " which of them should be the greatest, Jesus took a little child, and set him in the midst of them, and taking him in his arms, said unto them, Whosoever shall receive one of these little children in my name, receiveth me: and whosoever receiveth me, receiveth not me (only) but him that sent me." Then John answered (that is, said with reference to what our Lord had spoken just before) " Master, we saw one casting out devils in thy name, and we forbade him, because he followeth not us." As if he had said, " Ought we to have received him? In receiving him, should we have received thee? Ought we not rather to have forbidden him? Did not we do well therein?" " But Jesus said, Forbid him not."

2. The same passage is recited by St. Luke, and almost in the same words. But it may be asked, What is this to us? Seeing no man now *casts out devils*. Has not the power of doing this been withdrawn from the Church, for twelve or fourteen hundred years? How then are *we* concerned in the case here proposed, or in our Lord's decision of it?

3. Perhaps more nearly than is commonly imagined, the case proposed being no uncommon case. That we may reap our full advantage from it I design to shew, First, In what sense men may and do now *cast out devils*: Secondly, What we may understand by, *He followeth not us*. I shall, Thirdly, explain our Lord's direction, *Forbid him not*, and conclude with an inference from the whole.

I. 1. I am, in the first place to shew, In what sense men may, and do now *cast out devils*.

In order to have the clearest view of this, we should remember, that (according to the scriptural account) as God dwells and works in the children of light, so the devil dwells and works in the children of darkness. As the holy Spirit possesses the souls of good men, so the evil spirit possesses the souls of the wicked. Hence it is that the Apostle terms him, *The god of this world*: from the uncontrolled power he has over worldly men. Hence our blessed Lord styles him *the prince of this world*: so absolute is his dominion over it. And hence St. John, *We know that we are of God*, and all who are not of God, *the whole world*, *ἐν τῷ πονηρῷ καὶ τῷ*. Not, lieth in wickedness: but *lieth in the wicked one*; lives and moves in him, as they who are not of the world, do in God.

2. For the devil is not to be considered only as a "roaring lion, going about seeking whom he may devour:" nor barely as a subtle enemy, who cometh unawares upon poor souls and *leads them captive at his will*: but as he who dwelleth in them and walketh in them; who *ruleth the darkness* or wickedness of *this world*, of worldly men and all their dark designs and actions, by keeping possession of their hearts, setting up his throne there, and bringing every thought into obedience to himself. Thus the *strong one armed keepeth his house*; and if this *unclean spirit* sometimes *go out of a man*, yet he often returns with *seven spirits worse than himself*,
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and they enter in and dwell there. Nor can he be idle in his dwelling. He is continually *working in these children of disobedience.* He works in them with power, with mighty energy, transforming them into his own likeness, effacing all the remains of the image of God, and preparing them for every evil word or work.

3. It is therefore an unquestionable truth, that the god and prince of this world, still possesses all who know not God. Only the manner wherein he possesses them now, differs from that wherein he did it of old time. Then he frequently tormented their bodies, as well as souls, and that openly, without any disguise. Now he torments their souls only, (unless in some rare cases) and that as covertly as possible. The reason of this difference is plain. It was then his aim to drive mankind into superstition. Therefore he wrought as openly as he could. But it is his aim to drive us into infidelity. Therefore he works as privately as he can; for the more secret he is, the more he prevails.

4. Yet, if we may credit historians, there are countries even now, where he works as openly as aforetime. "But why in savage and barbarous countries only? Why not in Italy, France, or England?" For a very plain reason: he knows his men. And he knows what he hath to do with each. To Laplanders, he appears barefaced: because he is to fix them in superstition and gross idolatry. But with you he is pursuing a different point. He is to make you idolize yourselves: to make you wiser in your own eyes than God himself, than all the Oracles of God. Now in order to this, he must not appear in his own shape: that would frustrate his design. No: he uses all his art, to make you deny his being, till he has you safe in his own place.

5. He reigns therefore, although in a different way, yet as absolute in one land as in the other. He has the gay Italian infidel in his teeth, as sure

as the wild Tartar. But he is fast asleep in the mouth of the lion, who is too wise to wake him out of sleep. So he only plays with him for the present, and when he pleases swallows him up.

The god of this world holds his English worshippers full as fast as those in Lapland. But it is not his business to affright them, lest they should fly to the God of heaven. The prince of darkness therefore does not appear, while he rules over these his willing subjects. The conqueror holds his captives so much the safer, because they imagine themselves at liberty. Thus the *strong one armed keepeth his house, and his goods are in peace*: neither the Deist nor nominal Christian suspects he is there; so he and they are perfectly at peace with each other.

6. All this while he works with energy in them. He blinds the eyes of their understanding, so that the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, cannot shine upon them. He chains their souls down to earth and hell, with the chains of their own vile affections. He binds them down to the earth, by love of the world, love of money, of pleasure, of praise. And by pride, envy, anger, hate, revenge, he causes their souls to draw nigh unto hell: acting the more secure and uncontrolled, because they know not that he acts at all.

7. But how easily may we know the cause from its effects? These are sometimes gross and palpable. So they were in the most refined of the heathen nations. Go no farther than the admired, the virtuous Romans. And you will find these, when at the height of their learning and glory, "filled with all unrighteousness; fornication, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness; full of envy, murder, debate, deceit, malignity: whisperers, backbiters, despiteful, proud boasters, disobedient to parents; covenant-breakers, without natural affection; implacable, unmerciful."

8. The

8. The strongest parts of this description are confirmed by one, whom some may think a more unexceptionable witness. I mean, their brother heathen, Dion Cassius: who observes, that before Cesar's return from Gaul, not only gluttony and lewdness of every kind, were open and barefaced; not only falsehood, injustice and unmercifulness abounded, in public courts as well as private families: but the most outrageous robberies, rapine and murders, were so frequent in all parts of Rome, that few men went out of doors without making their wills, as not knowing if they should return alive.

9. As gross and palpable are the works of the devil, among many (if not all) the modern heathens. The natural Religion of the Greeks, Cheri-kees, Chicafaws, and all other Indians, bordering on our southern settlements (not of a few single men, but of entire nations) is, to torture all their prisoners from morning to night, till at length they roast them to death; and upon the slightest, undesigned provocation, to come behind and shoot any of their own countrymen. Yea, it is a common thing among them, for the son, if he thinks his father lives too long, to knock out his brains: and for a mother, if she is tired of her children, to fasten stones about their necks, and throw three or four of them into the river, one after another.

10. It were to be wished that none but heathens had practised such gross, palpable works of the devil. But we dare not say so. Even in cruelty and bloodshed, how little have the Christians come behind them? And not the Spaniards or Portuguese alone, butchering thousands in South-America. Not the Dutch only in the East-Indies, or the French in North-America, following the Spaniards step by step. Our own countrymen too have wanted in blood, and exterminated whole nations: plainly proving thereby, what spirit it is, that dwells and works in the children of disobedience.

11. These

11. These monsters might almost make us overlook the works of the devil that are wrought in our own country. But alas! We cannot open our eyes even here, without seeing them on every side. It is a small proof of his power, that common swearers, drunkards, whoremongers, adulterers, thieves, robbers, sodomites, murderers, are still found in every part of our land? How triumphant does the prince of this world reign, in all these children of disobedience?

12. He less openly, but no less effectually works in dissemblers, talebearers, liars, slanderers: in oppressors and extortioners; in the perjured, the seller of his friend, his honour, his conscience, his country. And yet these may talk of religion or conscience still! of honour, virtue and public spirit. But they can no more deceive Satan than they can God. He likewise knows those that are his: and a great multitude they are out of every nation and people of whom he has full possession at this day.

13. If you consider this, you cannot but see in what sense, men may now also *cast out devils*: yea, and every Minister of Christ does cast them out, if his Lord's work prosper in his hand.

By the power of God attending his word, he brings these sinners to repentance: an entire inward as well as outward change, from all evil to all good. And this is, in a sound sense, *to cast out devils*, out of the souls wherein they had hitherto dwelt. The strong one can no longer keep his house. A stronger than he is come upon him, and hath cast him out, taken possession for himself, and made it an habitation of God through his Spirit. Here then the energy of Satan ends, and the Son of God *destroys the works of the devil*. The understanding of the sinner is now enlightened, and his heart sweetly drawn to God. His desires are refined, his affections purified: and being filled with the Holy Ghost, he grows in grace till he is

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not only holy in heart, but in all manner of conversation.

14. All this is indeed the work of God. It is God alone who can cast out Satan. But he is generally pleased to do this by man, as an instrument in his hand; who is then said, "to cast out devils in his name, by his power and authority. And he sends whom he will send upon this great work: but usually such as man would never have thought of. For "his ways are not as our ways, neither his thoughts as our thoughts." Accordingly he chuses the weak to confound the mighty: the foolish to confound the wise: for this plain reason, That he may secure the glory to himself; that "no flesh may glory in his sight."

II. 1. But shall we not *forbid* one who thus *casteth out devils*, if he *followeth not us*? This it seems was both the judgment and practice of the Apostle, till he referred the case to his Master. *We forbade him*, saith he, *because he followeth not us*, which he supposed to be a very sufficient reason. What we may understand by this expression, *He followeth not us*, is the next point to be considered.

The lowest circumstance we can understand thereby, is, He has no outward connexion with us. We do not labour in conjunction with each other. He is not our fellow-helper in the gospel. And indeed whensoever our Lord is pleased, to send many labourers into his harvest, they cannot all act, in subordination to, or connexion with each other. Nay, they cannot all have personal acquaintance with, nor be so much as known to one another. Many there will necessarily be in different parts of the harvest, so far from having any mutual intercourse, that they will be as absolute strangers to each other, as if they had lived in different ages. And concerning any of these whom we know not, we may doubtless say, *He followeth not us*.

2. A second

2. A second meaning of this expression may be, *He is not of our Party.* It has long been matter of melancholy consideration, to all who pray for the peace of *Jerusalem*, that so many several parties are still subsisting among those who are all styled Christians. This has been particularly observable in our own countrymen, who have been continually dividing from each other, upon points of no moment, and many times such as Religion had no concern in. The most trifling circumstances have given rise to different parties which have continued for many generations. And each of these would be ready to object to one who was on the other side, *He followeth not us.*

3. That expression may mean, Thirdly, He differs from us, in our *Religious Opinions.* There was a time, when all Christians were of one mind, as well as of one heart. So great grace was upon them all, when they were first filled with the Holy Ghost. But how short a space did this blessing continue? How soon was that unanimity lost, and difference of opinion sprang up again, even in the Church of Christ? And that not in nominal, but in real Christians: nay in the very chief of them, the Apostles themselves? Nor does it appear, That the difference which then began, was ever entirely removed. We do not find, that even those pillars in the temple of God, so long as they remained upon earth, were ever brought to think alike, to be of one mind, particularly with regard to the ceremonial law. It is therefore no way surprising, that infinite varieties of opinion should now be found in the Christian Church. A very probable consequence of this is, That whenever we see any *casting out devils*, he will be one that, in this sense, *followeth not us*: that is not of our opinion. It is scarce to be imagined he will be of our mind, in all points, even of Religion. He may very probably think in a different manner from us, even on several subjects of importance: such as, the
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nature and use of the moral law, the eternal decrees of God, the sufficiency and efficacy of his grace, and the perseverance of his children.

4. He may differ from us, fourthly, not only in opinion, but likewise in some point of practice. He may not approve of that manner of worshipping God, which is practised in our congregation: and may judge that to be more profitable for his soul, which took its rise from Mr. Calvin or Martin Luther. He may have many objections to that liturgy, which we approve of, beyond all others: many doubts concerning that form of Church-government, which we esteem both Apostolical and Scriptural. Perhaps he may go farther from us yet: he may, from a principle of conscience, refrain from several of those, which we believe to be the ordinances of Christ. Or if we both agree, That they are ordained of God, there may still remain a difference between us, either as to the manner of administering those ordinances, or the persons to whom they should be administered. Now the unavoidable consequence of any of these differences, will be, that he who thus differs from us, must separate himself, with regard to those points, from our society. In this respect therefore *he followeth not us*: he is not (as we phrase it) *of our Church*.

5. But in far a stronger sense, *he followeth not us*, who is only of a different Church, but of such a Church as we account to be in many respects antiscritptural and antichristian: a Church which we believe to be utterly false and erroneous in her doctrines, as well as very dangerously wrong in her practice, guilty of gross superstition as well as idolatry. A Church that has added many articles to the Faith, which was once delivered to the saints; that has dropt one whole commandment of God, and made void several of the rest by her traditions: and that pretending the highest veneration for, and strictest conformity to the ancient Church, has nevertheless

nevertheless brought in numberless innovations, without any warrant either from antiquity or scripture. Now most certainly *he followeth not us*, who stands at so great a distance from us.

6. And yet there may be a still wider difference than this. He who differs from us in judgment or practice, may possibly stand at a greater distance from us, in affection than in judgment. And this indeed is a very natural and a very common effect of the other. The differences which begin in points of opinion, seldom terminate there. They generally spread into the affections, and then separate chief friends. Nor are any animosities so deep and irreconcilable, as those that spring from disagreement in Religion. For this cause the bitterest enemies of a man, are those of his own household. For this the father rises against his own children, and the children against the father; and perhaps persecute each other even to the death, thinking all the time they are doing God service. It is therefore nothing more than we expect, if those who differ from us either in religious opinions or practice, soon contract a sharpness, yea bitterness toward us; if they are more and more prejudiced against us, till they conceive as ill an opinion of our persons as of our principles. An almost necessary consequence of this will be, they will speak in the same manner as they think of us. They will set themselves in opposition to us, and as far as they are able hinder our work: seeing it does not appear to them to be the work of God, but either of man or of the devil. He that thinks, speaks and acts in such a manner as this, in the highest sense, *followeth not us*.

7. I do not indeed conceive, that the person of whom the Apostle speaks in the text (although we have no particular account of him, either in the context, or in any other part of Holy Writ) went so far as this. We have no ground to suppose, That there was any material difference between him
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and the Apostles; much less that he had any prejudice either against them or their master. It seems we may gather thus much from our Lord's own words, which immediately follow the text, "There is no man which shall do a miracle in my name, that can lightly speak evil of me." But I purposely put the case in the strongest light, adding all the circumstances which can well be conceived: that being forewarned of the temptation in its full strength, we may in no case yield to it, and fight against God.

III. 1. Suppose then a man have no intercourse with us, suppose he be not of our party, suppose he separate from our Church, yea and widely differ from us, both in judgment, practice and affection: yet if we see even this man *casting out devils, Jesus saith, forbid him not.* This important direction of our Lord, I am, in the third place, to explain.

2. If we see this man casting out devils—But it is well, if in such a case, we would believe even what we saw with our eyes, if we did not give the lie to our own senses. He must be little acquainted with human nature, who does not immediately perceive, how extremely unready we should be, to believe that any man does cast out devils, who *followeth not us*, in all or most of the senses above-recited. I had almost said, In any of them: seeing we may easily learn even from what passes in our own breasts, how unwilling men are, to allow any thing good in those, who do not in all things agree with themselves.

3. "But what is a sufficient, reasonable proof that man does (in the sense above) cast out devils?" The answer is easy. Is there full proof, 1. That a person before us was a gross, open sinner? 2. That he is not so now; that he has broke off his sins, and lives a Christian life? And, 3. That this change was wrought by his hearing this man

preach? If these three points be plain and undeniable, then you have sufficient, reasonable proof, such as you cannot resist without wilful sin, That this man casts out devils.

4. Then *forbid him not*. Beware how you attempt to hinder him, either by your authority or arguments or persuasions. Do not in anywise strive to prevent his using all the power which God has given him. If you have *authority* with him, do not use that authority, to stop the work of God. Do not furnish him with *reasons*, why he ought not any more to speak in the name of Jesus. Satan will not fail to supply him with these, if you do not second him therein. *Persuade* him not, to depart from the work. If he should give place to the devil and you, many souls might perish in their iniquity, but their blood would God require at *your* hands.

5. "But what if he be only a *Layman* who casts out devils? Ought I not to forbid him then?"

Is the fact allowed? Is there reasonable proof, That this man has or does *cast out devils*? If there is, forbid him not: no, not at the peril of your soul. Shall not God work by whom he will work? "No man can do these works unless God is with him," unless God hath sent him for this very thing. But if God hath sent him, will you call him back? Will you forbid him to go?

6. "But I do not know, That he is sent of God." Now herein is a *marvellous thing* (may any of the Seals of his mission say, any whom he hath brought from Satan to God) *that ye know not whence this man is, and behold he hath opened my eyes! If this man were not of God, he could do nothing.* If you doubt the fact, send for the parents of the man: send for his brethren, friends, acquaintance. But if you cannot doubt this, if you must needs acknowledge, "That a notable miracle hath been wrought," then with what conscience, with

with what face can you *charge* him whom God hath sent, *not to speak any more in his name*?

7. I allow, That it is *highly expedient*; whoever preaches in his name, should have an outward as well as an inward call. But that it is *absolutely necessary* I deny.

"Nay, is not the Scripture express? "No man taketh this honour unto himself, but he that is called of God, as Aaron?" Heb. v. 4.

Numberless times has this text been quoted on the occasion, as containing the very strength of the cause. But surely never was so unhappy a quotation. For, first, Aaron was not called to preach at all. He was called *to offer gifts and sacrifice for sin*. That was his peculiar employment. Secondly, These men do not offer sacrifice at all; but only preach, which Aaron did not. Therefore it is not possible to find one text in all the Bible, which is more wide of the point than this.

8. "But what was the practice of the Apostolic age?" You may easily see in the Acts of the Apostles. In the 8th chapter we read, "There was a great persecution against the Church which was at Jerusalem: and they were all scattered abroad throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria, except the Apostles, ver. 1. Therefore they that were scattered abroad, went every where preaching the word," ver. 4. Now were all these outwardly called to preach? No man in his senses can think so. Here then is an undeniable proof, what was the practice of the Apostolic age. Here you see not one, but a multitude of *Lay-Preachers*, men that were only sent of God.

9. Indeed so far is the practice of the Apostolic age, from inclining us to think it was *unlawful*, for a man to preach before he was ordained, that we have reason to think, it was then accounted *necessary*. Certainly the practice and the direction of the Apostle Paul was, To *prove* a man before

he was ordained at all. "Let these, (the Deacons) says he, first be proved; then let them use the office of a Deacon"—1 Tim. iii. 10. Proved? How? By setting them to construe a Sentence of Greek? And asking them a few common-place questions? O amazing proof of a Minister of Christ! Nay: but by making a clear, open trial (as is still done by most of the Protestant Churches in Europe) not only whether their lives be holy and unblameable, but whether they have such gifts as are absolutely and indispensably necessary, in order to edify the Church of Christ.

10. "But what if a man has these? And has brought sinners to repentance? And yet the Bishop will not ordain him?" Then the Bishop does *forbid him to cast out devils*. But I dare not forbid him. I have published my reasons to all the world. Yet it is still insisted, I ought to do it. You who insist upon it, answer those reasons. I know not that any have done this yet, or even made an attempt of doing it. Only some have spoken of them as very weak and trifling, and this was prudent enough. For it is far easier to despise, at least, seem to despise an argument than to answer it. Yet till this is done I must say, when I have reasonable proof that any man does cast out devils, whatever others do, I dare not forbid him, lest I be found even to fight against God.

11. And whosoever thou art that fearest God, *forbid him not*, either directly or indirectly. There are many ways of doing this. You indirectly forbid him, if you either wholly deny, or despise and make little account of the work which God has wrought by his hands. You indirectly forbid him, when you discourage him in his work, by drawing him into disputes concerning it, by raising objections against it, or frightening him with consequences, which very possibly will never be. You forbid him, when you shew any unkindness toward him, either in language or behaviour: and much more,
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when you speak of him to others, either in an unkind or a contemptuous manner: when you endeavour to represent him to any, either in an odious or a despicable light. You are forbidding him all the time you are speaking evil of him, or making no account of his labours. O forbid him not in any of these ways: nor by forbidding others to hear him, by discouraging sinners from hearing that word, which is able to save their souls.

12. Yea, if you would observe our Lord's directions in its full meaning and extent, then remember his word, "He that is not for us, is against us; and he that gathereth not with me, scattereth:" He that gathereth not men into the kingdom of God, assuredly scatters them from it. For there can be no neuter in this war. Every one is either on God's side or Satan's. Are you on God's side? Then you will not only not forbid any man that *casts out devils*, but you will labour to the uttermost of your power, to forward him in the work. You will readily acknowledge the work of God, and confess the greatness of it. You will remove all difficulties and objections, as far as may be out of his way. You will strengthen his hands by speaking honourably of him before all men, and avowing the things which you have seen and heard. You will encourage others to attend upon his word, to hear him whom God hath sent. And you will omit no actual proof of tender love, which God gives you an opportunity of shewing him.

IV. 1. If we willingly fail in any of these points, if we either directly or indirectly forbid him, *because he followeth not us*, then we are Bigots. This is the inference I draw from what has been said. But the term Bigotry, I fear, as frequently as it is used, is almost as little understood as Enthusiasm. It is, too strong an attachment to, or fondness for, our own party, opinion, Church and Religion. Therefore he is a Bigot,

who is so fond of any of these, so strongly attached to them, as to forbid any who casts out devils, because he differs from himself, in any or all these particulars.

2. Do you beware of this. Take care, 1. That you do not convict yourself of Bigotry, by your unreadiness to believe, that any man does cast out devils, who differs from you. And if you are clear thus far, if you acknowledge the fact, then examine yourself. 2. Am I not convicted of Bigotry in this, in forbidding him directly or indirectly? Do I not directly forbid him on this ground, because he is not of my *Party*? Because he does not fall in with my *Opinions*? Or because he does not worship God according to that scheme of Religion, which I have received from my fathers?

3. Examine yourself. Do I not indirectly at least forbid him, on any of these grounds? Am I not sorry, that God should thus own and bless a man that holds such erroneous opinions? Do I not discourage him, because he is not of my Church? By disputing with him concerning it, by raising objections, and by perplexing his mind with distant consequences? Do I shew no anger, contempt or unkindness of any sort, either in my words or actions? Do I not mention behind his back, his (real or supposed) faults? His defects or infirmities? Do not I hinder sinners from hearing his word? If you do any of these things, you are a Bigot to this day.

4. "Search me, O Lord, and prove me. Try out my reins and my heart! Look well if there be any way of *Bigotry* in me, and lead me in the way everlasting." In order to examine ourselves thoroughly, let the case be proposed in the strongest manner. What if I were to see a Papist, an Arian, a Socinian casting out devils? If I did, I could not forbid even him, without convicting myself of Bigotry. Yea, If it could be supposed, that I should see a Jew, a Deist or a Turk doing the same,
were

were I to forbid him either directly or indirectly, I should be no better than a Bigot still.

5. O stand clear of this. But be not content with not forbidding any that casts out devils. It is well, to go thus far, but do not stop here. If you will avoid all Bigotry, go on. In every instance of this kind, whatever the instrument be, acknowledge the finger of God. And not only acknowledge, but rejoice in his work and praise his name with thanksgiving. Encourage whomsoever God is pleased to employ, to give himself wholly up thereto. Speak well of him wheresoever you are: defend his character and his mission. Enlarge as far as you can his sphere of action. Shew him all kindness in word and deed. And cease not to cry to God in his behalf, that he may save both himself and them that hear him.

6. I need add but one caution. Think not, the Bigotry of another, is any excuse for your own. It is not impossible, that one who casts out devils himself may yet forbid you so to do. You may observe, this is the very case mentioned in the text. The Apostles forbade another to do what they did themselves. But beware of retorting. It is not your part, to return evil for evil. Another's not observing the direction of our Lord, is no reason why you should neglect it. Nay, but let him have all the Bigotry to himself. If he forbids *you*, do not you forbid *him*. Rather labour and watch and pray the more, to confirm your love toward him. If he speaks all manner of evil of *you*, speak all manner of good (that is true) of *him*. Imitate herein that glorious saying of a great man (O that he had always breathed the same spirit!) "Let Luther call me an hundred devils: I will still reverence him as a messenger of God."

SERMON XXXVIII.

CATHOLIC SPIRIT.

2 KINGS X. 15.

“ And when he was departed thence, he lighted on Jehonadab the son of Rechab coming to meet him. And he saluted him and said, Is thine heart right as my heart is with thy heart ? And Jehonadab answered, It is. If it be, give me thy hand.”

1. **I**T is allowed even by those who do not pay this great debt, that love is due to all mankind: the royal law, “ Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself,” carrying its own evidence to all that hear it. And that, not according to the miserable construction put upon it by the zealots of old times, “ Thou shalt love thy neighbour,” thy relation, acquaintance, friend, “ and hate thine enemy :” not so. “ I say unto you, saith our Lord, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you : do good to them that hate you, and pray for them that despitefully use you and persecute you : that ye may be the children, [may appear so to all mankind,] of your Father which is in heaven, who maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust.”

2. But it is sure, there is a peculiar love which we owe to those that love God. So David, “ All my delight is upon the saints that are in the earth and upon such as excel in virtue.” And so a greater than he, “ A new commandment I give unto you, that ye love one another : as I have loved you, that ye also love another. By this shall all men know that

that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another." John xiii. 34, 35. This is that love on which the Apostle John so frequently and strongly insists, "This, saith he, is the message that ye heard from the beginning, that ye should love one another," John iii. 11. "Hereby perceive we the love of God, because he laid down his life for us. And we ought, [if love should call us thereto,] to lay down our lives for the brethren," ver. 16. And again, "Beloved, let us love one another, for love is of God. He that loveth not, knoweth not God: for God is love," chap. iv. 7, 8. "Not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins. Beloved, if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another," ver. 10, 11.

3. All men approve of this. But do all men practise it? Daily experience shews the contrary. Where are even the Christians who "love one another, as He hath given us commandment? How many hindrances lie in the way? The two grand, general hindrances are, first, That they cannot all think alike: and, in consequence of this; secondly, They cannot all walk alike: but in several smaller points their practice must differ, in proportion to the difference of their sentiments.

4. But although a difference in opinions or modes of worship, may prevent an entire external union, yet need it prevent our union in affection? Though we cannot think alike, may we not love alike? May we not be of one heart, though we are not of one opinion? Without all doubt we may. Herein all the children of God may unite, notwithstanding these smaller differences. These remaining as they are, they may forward one another, in love and good works.

5. Surely in this respect, the example of Jehu himself, as mixt a character as he was of, is well worthy both the attention and imitation, of every serious Christian. "And when he was departed thence,

thence, he lighted on Jehonadab the son of Rechab coming to meet him. And he saluted him and said, Is thine heart right, as my heart is with thy heart? And Jehonadab answered, It is. If it be, Give me thine hand."

The text naturally divides itself into two parts, first, A question proposed by Jehu to Jehonadab, "Is thine heart right, as my heart is with thy heart?" Secondly, An offer made on Jehonadab's answering, "It is. If it be, give me thine hand."

I. 1. And, first, let us consider the question proposed by Jehu to Jehonadab, "Is thine heart right, as my heart is with thy heart?"

The very first thing we may observe in these words, is that here is no enquiry concerning Jehonadab's opinions. And yet it is certain, he held some which were very uncommon, indeed quite peculiar to himself: and some which had a close influence upon practice: on which likewise he laid so great a stress, as to entail them upon his children's children, to their latest posterity. This is evident from the account given by Jeremiah, many years after his death. "I took Jaazaniah and his brethren, and all his sons, and the whole house of the Rechabites—And set before them pots full of wine and cups, and said unto them, Drink ye wine. But they said, we will drink no wine; for Jonadab (or Jehonadab) the son of Rechab our father," (it would be less ambiguous if the words were placed thus, *Jehonadab our father the son of Rechab*: out of love and reverence to whom he probably desired his descendants might be called by that name) "commanded us, saying, Ye shall drink no wine, neither ye nor your sons for ever. Neither shall ye build house, nor sow seed, nor plant vineyard, nor have any; but all your days ye shall dwell in tents—And we have obeyed and done according to all that Jonadab our father commanded us," Jer. xxxv. 3—10.

2. And

2. And yet Jehu (although it seems to have been his manner, both in things secular and religious, to *drive furiously*) does not concern himself at all with any of these things, but lets Jehonadab abound in his own sense. And neither of them appears to have given the other the least disturbance, touching the opinions which he maintained.

3. It is very possible, that many good men now also may entertain peculiar opinions: and some of them may be as singular herein, as even Jehonadab was. And it is certain, so long as *we know but in part*, that all men will not see all things alike. It is an unavoidable consequence of the present weakness and shortness of human understanding, that several men will be of several minds, in Religion as well as in common life. So it has been from the beginning of the world, and so it will be *till the restitution of all things*.

4. Nay farther: although every man necessarily believes, that every particular opinion which he holds is true (for, to believe any opinion is not true, is the same thing as, not to hold it :) yet can no man be assured, That all his own opinions taken together, are true. Nay every thinking man is assured they are not: seeing *Humanum est errare et nescire*. To be ignorant of many things, and to mistake in some, is the necessary condition of humanity. This therefore he is sensible is his own case. He knows in the general, that he himself is mistaken. Although in what particulars he mistakes, he does not, perhaps he cannot know.

5. I say, perhaps he cannot know. For who can tell how far invincible ignorance may extend? Or (that comes to the same thing) invincible prejudice: which is so often fixed in tender minds, that it is afterwards impossible to tear up what has taken so deep a root. And who can say, unless he knew every circumstance attending it, how far any mistake is culpable? Seeing all guilt must
suppose

suppose some concurrence of the will: of which He can only judge who searcheth the heart.

6. Every wise man therefore will allow others the same liberty of thinking, which he desires they should allow him: and will no more insist on their embracing his opinions, than he would have them to insist on his embracing theirs. He bears with those who differ from him, and only asks him, with whom he desires to unite in love, that single question, "Is thy heart right, as my heart is with thy heart?"

7. We may, secondly, observe, That here is no enquiry made concerning Jehonadab's mode of worship: although it is highly probable, there was in this respect also, a very wide difference between them. For we may well believe Jehonadab as well as his posterity, worshipped God at Jerusalem: whereas Jehu did not; he had more regard to state-policy than Religion. And therefore although he slew the worshippers of Baal, *and destroyed Baal, out of Israel*: yet *from the convenient sin of Jeroboam, the worship of the golden calves, he departed not*, 2 Kings x. 29.

8. But even among men of an upright heart, men who desire to *have a conscience void of offence*, it must needs be, that as long as there are various opinions, there will be various ways of worshipping God: seeing a variety of opinions necessarily implies a variety of practice. And as in all ages, men have differed in nothing more than in their opinions concerning the Supreme Being, so in nothing have they more differed from each other, than in the manner of worshipping him. Had this been only in the heathen world, it would not have been at all surprising. For we know these *by their wisdom knew not God*; nor therefore could they know how to worship him. But is it not strange, that even in the Christian world, although they all agree in the general, "God is a spirit; and they that worship him, must worship him in spirit and in

in truth :” yet the particular modes of worshipping God, are almost as various as among the heathens ?

9. And how shall we chuse, among so much variety ? No man can chuse for, or prescribe to another. But every one must follow the dictates of his own conscience, in simplicity and godly sincerity. He must be fully persuaded in his own mind, and then act according to the best light he has. Nor has any creature power to constrain another to walk by his own rule. God has given no right to any of the children of men, thus to lord it over the conscience of his brethren. But every man must judge for himself, as every man must give an account of himself to God.

10. Although therefore every follower of Christ is obliged by the very nature of the Christian institution, to be a member of some particular Congregation or other, some Church, as it is usually termed : (which implies a particular manner of worshipping God ; for “two cannot walk together unless they be agreed ;”) yet none can be obliged by any power on earth, but that of his own conscience, to prefer this or that congregation to another, this or that particular manner of worship. I know it is commonly supposed, that the place of our birth, fixes the Church to which we ought to belong : that one, for instance, who is born in England ought to be a member of that which is styled, *The Church of England*, and consequently to worship God in the particular manner, which is prescribed by that Church. I was once a zealous maintainer of this : but I find many reasons to abate of this zeal. I fear, it is attended with such difficulties, that no reasonable man can get over. Not the least of which is, that if this rule had took place, there could have been no reformation from Popery : seeing it entirely destroys the right of

private judgment, on which that whole reformation stands.

11. I dare not therefore presume to impose my mode of worship on any other. I believe it is truly primitive and apostolical. But my belief is no rule for another. I ask not therefore of him with whom I would unite in love, "Are you of my Church? Of my congregation? Do you receive the same form of Church-government, and allow the same Church-Officers with me? Do you join in the same form of prayer, wherein I worship God?" I enquire not, Do you receive the supper of the Lord, in the same posture and manner that I do? Nor, whether in the administration of baptism, you agree with me, in admitting sureties for the baptised? In the manner of administering it? Or the age of those to whom it should be administered? Nay, I ask not of you (as clear as I am in my own mind, Whether you allow baptism and the Lord's supper at all? Let all these things stand by: we will talk of them, if need be, at a more convenient season. My only question at present is this, "Is thine heart right, as my heart is with thy heart?"

12. But what is properly implied in the question? I do not mean, what did Jehu imply therein. But what should a follower of Christ understand thereby, when he proposes it to any of his brethren?

The first thing implied in this: Is thy heart right with God? Dost thou believe his being, and his perfections? His eternity, immensity, wisdom, power: his justice, mercy and truth? Dost thou believe, that he now "upholdeth all things by the word of his power?" And that he governs even the most minute, even the most noxious, to his own glory and the good of them that love him? Hast thou a divine evidence, supernatural conviction, of the things of God? Dost thou "walk by faith, not by sight?" Looking not at temporal things, but things eternal?"

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13. Dost thou believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, "God over all, blessed for ever?" Is he revealed in thy soul? Dost thou "know Jesus Christ and him crucified?" Does he "dwell in thee, and thou in him." Is he "formed in thy heart by faith?" Having absolutely disclaimed all thy own works, thy own righteousness, hast thou "submitted thyself unto the righteousness of God, which is by faith in Christ Jesus?" Art thou "found in him, not having thy own righteousness, but the righteousness which is by faith?" And art thou, through him, "fighting the good fight of faith, and laying hold of eternal life."

14. Is thy faith *ἐνεργουμένη δι' ἀγάπης* filled with the energy of love? Dost thou love God? I do not say, *above all things*; for it is both an unscriptural and an ambiguous expression: but "with all thy heart, and with all thy strength? Dost thou seek all thy happiness in him alone? And dost thou find what thou seekest? Does thy soul continually "magnify the Lord and thy spirit rejoice in God thy Saviour?" Having learned *in every thing to give thanks*, dost thou find, "it is a joyful and a pleasant thing to be thankful?" Is God the center of thy soul? The sum of all thy desires? Art thou accordingly *laying up thy treasures in heaven*, and *counting all things else dung and dross*? Hath the love of God cast the love of the world out of thy soul? Then thou art *crucified to the world*. Thou art dead to all below and thy life is hid with Christ in God.

15. Art thou employed in doing "not thy own will, but the will of him that sent thee?" Of him that sent thee down to sojourn here awhile, to spend a few days in a strange land, till having finished the work he hath given thee to do, thou return to thy father's house? Is it thy meat and drink "to do the will of thy Father which is in heaven?" Is *thine eye single* in all things? Always fixt on him? Always looking unto Jesus?

Dost thou point at him in whatsoever thou dost? In all thy labour, thy business, thy conversation? Aiming only at the glory of God in all? "Whatsoever thou dost, either in word or deed, doing it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks unto God even the Father through him?"

16. Does the love of God constrain thee to *serve him with fear*? To *rejoice unto him with reverence*? Art thou more afraid of displeasing God, than either of death or hell? Is nothing so terrible to thee as the thought of "offending the eyes of his glory?" Upon this ground dost thou *hate all evil ways*; every transgression of his holy and perfect law? And herein "exercise thyself, to have a conscience void of offence toward God and toward man?"

17. Is thy heart right toward thy neighbour? Dost thou *love as thyself*, all mankind without exception? "If you love those only that love you, what thank have you?" Do you *love your enemies*? Is your soul full of good will, of tender affection toward them? Do you love even the enemies of God? The unthankful and unholy? Do your bowels yearn over them? Could you *wish yourself* (temporally *accurst*) for their sake? And do you shew this, by "blessing them that curse you, and praying for those that despitefully use you and persecute you?"

18. Do you shew your love by your works? While you have time, as you have opportunity, do you in fact *do good to all men*, neighbours or strangers, friends, or enemies, good or bad? Do you do them all the good you can? Endeavouring to supply all their wants, assisting them both in body and soul, to the uttermost of your power? If thou art thus minded, may every Christian say, yea, if thou art but sincerely desirous of it, and following on till thou attain, then "thy heart is right, as my heart is with thy heart."

II. 1. "If it be, give me thine hand." I do not mean, "Be of my opinion." You need not. I do not expect or desire it. Neither do I mean, "I will be of your opinion." I cannot. It does not depend on my choice: I can no more think, than I can see or hear as I will. Keep you your opinion, I mine: and that as steadily as ever. You need not even endeavour to come over to me, or bring me over to you. I do not desire you to dispute those points, or to hear or speak one word concerning them. Let all opinions alone on one side and the other. Only *give me thine hand.*

2. I do not mean, "Embrace my modes of worship; or, I will embrace yours." This also is a thing which does not depend either on your choice or mine. We must both act, as each is fully persuaded in his own mind. Hold you fast that which you believe is most acceptable to God, and I will do the same. I believe the Episcopal form of Church-government to be scriptural and apostolical. If you think the Presbyterian or Independent is better, think so still and act accordingly. I believe infants ought to be baptized, and that this may be done either by dipping or sprinkling. If you are otherwise persuaded, be so still, and follow your own persuasion. It appears to me, That forms of prayer are of excellent use, particularly in the great congregation. If you judge extemporary prayer to be of more use, act suitable to your own judgment. My sentiment is, That I ought not to forbid water, wherein persons may be baptized: and, that I ought to eat bread and drink wine, as a memorial of my dying Master. However, if you are not convinced of this, act according to the light you have. I have no desire to dispute with you one moment, upon any of the preceding heads. Let all these smaller points stand aside. Let them never come into fight. "If thine heart is as my heart," if thou lovest God and all mankind, I ask no more: *Give me thine hand.*

3. I mean, first, Love me. And that not only as thou lovest all mankind; not only as thou lovest thine enemies, or the enemies of God, those that have thee, that *despitefully use thee and persecute thee*: not only as a stranger, as one of whom thou knowest neither good nor evil. I am not satisfied with this. No; "If thine heart be right, as mine with thy heart," then love me with a very tender affection, as a friend that is closer than a brother: as a brother in Christ, a fellow-citizen of the new Jerusalem, a fellow-soldier engaged in the same warfare, under the same Captain of our salvation. Love me as a companion in the kingdom and patience of Jesus, and a joint-heir of his glory.

4. Love me (but in an higher degree, than thou dost the bulk of mankind) with the love that is *long-suffering and kind*, that is patient, if I am ignorant or out of the way, bearing and not increasing my burthen, and is tender, soft and compassionate still: that *envieth not*, if at any time it please God, to prosper me in this work even more than thee. Love me with the love that is *not provoked* either at my follies or infirmities; or even at my acting (if it should sometimes so appear to thee) not according to the will of God. Love me so as to *think no evil* of me, to put away all jealousy and evil surmising. Love me with the love that *covereth all things*, that never reveals either my faults or infirmities: that *believeth all things*, is always willing to think the best, to put the fairest construction on all my words and actions: that *hopeth all things*; either that the thing related was never done; or not done with such circumstances as are related: or at least, that it was done with a good intention: or in sudden stress of temptation. And hope to the end, that whatever is amiss, will by the grace of God be corrected, and whatever is wanting supplied, through the riches of his mercy in Christ Jesus.

5. I mean,

5. I mean, secondly, Commend me to God in all thy prayers, wrestle with him in my behalf, that he would speedily correct what he sees amiss, and supply what is wanting in me. In thy nearest access to the throne of grace, beg of him who is then very present with thee, That my heart may be more as thy heart, more right both toward God and toward man: That I may have a fuller conviction of things not seen, and a stronger view of the love of God in Christ Jesus: may more steadily walk by faith, not by sight, and more earnestly grasp eternal life. Pray, that the love of God and of all mankind, may be more largely poured into my heart; that I may be more fervent and active in doing the will of my Father which is in heaven; more zealous of good works, and more careful to abstain from all appearance of evil.

6. I mean, thirdly, Provoke me to love and to good works. Second thy prayer as thou hast opportunity, by speaking to me in love whatsoever thou believest to be for my soul's health. Quicken me in the work which God has given me to do, and instruct me how to do it more perfectly. Yea, *smite me friendly and reprove me*, wherein soever I appear to thee to be doing rather my own will, than the will of him that sent me. O speak and spare not, whatever thou believest may conduce, either to the amending my faults, the strengthening my weakness, the building me up in love, or the making me more fit in any kind for the Master's use.

7. I mean, lastly, Love me not in word only, but in deed and in truth. So far as in conscience thou canst (retaining still thy own opinions, and thy own manner of worshipping God) join with me in the work of God, and let us go on hand in hand. And thus far, it is certain, thou mayest go. Speak honourably wherever thou art, of the work of God by whomsoever he works, and kindly of his Messengers. And if it be in thy power, not
only

only sympathize with them when they are in any difficulty or distress, but give them a cheerful and effectual assistance, that they may glorify God on thy behalf.

8. Two things should be observed, with regard to what has been spoken under this last head. The one, that whatsoever love, whatsoever offices of love, whatsoever spiritual or temporal assistance, I claim from him whose heart is right, as my heart is with his: the same I am ready, by the grace of God, according to my measure, to give him. The other, that I have not made this claim, in behalf of myself only, but of all whose heart is right toward God and man, that we may all love one another, as Christ hath loved us.

III. 1. One inference we may make from what has been said. We may learn from hence, What is a Catholic spirit.

There is scarce any expression which has been more grossly misunderstood, and more dangerously misapplied than this. But it will be easy for any who calmly consider the preceding observations, to correct any such misapprehensions of it, and to prevent any such misapplication.

For from hence we may learn, first, That a Catholic spirit, is not *speculative* Latitudinarianism. It is not an indifference to all opinions. This is the spawn of hell, not the offspring of heaven. This unsettledness of thought, this being "driven to and fro and tost about with every wind of doctrine," is a great curse not a blessing; an irreconcilable enemy, not a friend to true Catholicism. A man of a truly Catholic spirit, has not now his Religion to seek. He is fixt as the sun in his judgment concerning the main branches of Christian doctrine. It is true, he is always ready to hear and weigh, whatsoever can be offered against his principles. But as this does not shew any wavering in his own mind, so neither does it occasion any.

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He does not halt between two opinions, nor vainly endeavour to blend them into one. Observe this, you who know not what Spirit ye are of: Who call yourselves men of a Catholic spirit, only because you are of a muddy understanding: because your mind is all in a mist: because you have no settled, consistent principles, but are for jumbling all opinions together. Be convinced, that you have quite missed your way: you know not where you are. You think you are got into the very spirit of Christ: when in truth you are nearer the spirit of antichrist. Go first and learn the first elements of the gospel of Christ, and then shall you learn to be of a truly Catholic spirit.

2. From what has been said we may learn secondly, That a Catholic spirit is not any kind of *practical* Latitudinarianism. It is not indifference as to public worship, or as to the outward manner of performing it. This likewise would not be a blessing but a curse. Far from being an help thereto, it would so long as it remained be an unspeakable hinderance to the worshipping of God in spirit and truth. But the man of a truly Catholic spirit, having weighed all things in the balance of the sanctuary, has no doubt, no scruple at all concerning that particular mode of worship wherein he joins. He is clearly convinced, that *this* manner of worshipping of God is both scriptural and rational. He knows none in the world, which is more scriptural, none which is more rational. Therefore, without rambling hither and thither, he cleaves close thereto, and praises God for the opportunity of so doing.

3. Hence we may, thirdly, learn, That a Catholic spirit is not indifference to all congregations. This is another sort of Latitudinarianism no less absurd and unscriptural than the former. But it is far from a man of a truly Catholic spirit. He is fixt in his congregation as well as in his principles. He is united to one, not only in spirit, but by all the

the outward ties of Christian fellowship. There he partakes of all the ordinances of God. There he receives the Supper of the Lord. There he pours out his soul in public prayer, and joins in public praise and thanksgiving. There he rejoices to hear the word of reconciliation, the gospel of the grace of God. With these his nearest, his best beloved brethren, on solemn occasions he seeks God by fasting. These particularly he watches over in love, as they do over his soul, admonishing, exhorting, comforting, reproving, and every way building up each other in the faith. These he regards as his own household, and therefore according to the ability God has given him, naturally cares for them, and provides that they may have all the things that are needful for life and godliness.

4. But while he is steadily fixt in his religious principles, in what he believes to be the truth as it is in Jesus: while he firmly adheres to that worship of God, which he judges to be most acceptable in his sight, and while he is united by the tenderest and closest ties, to one particular congregation: his heart is enlarged toward all mankind, those he knows and those he does not: he embraces with strong and cordial affection, neighbours and strangers, friends and enemies. This is catholic or universal love. And he that has this, is of a Catholic spirit. For love alone gives the title to this character. Catholic love is a Catholic spirit.

5. But if we take this word in the strictest sense, a man of a Catholic spirit, is one who in the manner above mentioned, *gives his hand*, to all whose *hearts are right with his heart*. One who knows how to value, and praise God, for all the advantages he enjoys; with regard to the knowledge of the things of God, the true scriptural manner of worshipping him; and above all, his union with a congregation, fearing God and working righteousness. One who retaining these blessings with the strictest care, keeping them as the apple of his eye,

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t the same time loves as friends, as brethren in the Lord, as members of Christ and children of God, as joint partakers now of the present kingdom of God, and fellow-heirs of his eternal kingdom, all of whatever opinion or worship or congregation, who believe in the Lord Jesus Christ; who love God and man; who rejoicing to please and fearing to offend God, are careful to abstain from evil and zealous of good works. He is the man of a truly Catholic spirit, who bears all these continually upon his heart, who having an unspeakable tenderness for their persons, and longing for their welfare, does not cease to commend them to God in prayer, as well as to plead their cause before men: who speaks comfortably to them, and labours by all his words, to strengthen their hands in God. He assists them to the uttermost of his power in all things, spiritual and temporal. He is ready to *spend and be spent for them; yea, to lay down his life for their sake.*

6. Thou, O man of God, think on these things. If thou art already in this way, go on. If thou hast heretofore mistook the path, bless God who hath brought thee back. And now run the race which is set before thee, in the royal way of universal love. Take heed, lest thou be either wavering in thy judgment or straitened in thy bowels. But keep an even pace, rooted in the faith once delivered to the saints, and grounded in love, in true Catholic love, till thou art swallowed up in love for ever and ever.

S E R M O N XXXIX.
CHRISTIAN PERFECTION.

PHILIPPIANS III. 12.

“ Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect.”

1. **T**H E R E is scarce any expression in Holy Writ, which has given more offence than this. The word *perfect* is what many cannot bear. The very sound of it is an abomination to them. And whosoever preaches *perfection* (as the phrase is) i. e. asserts that it is attainable in this life, runs great hazard of being accounted by them, worse than a heathen man or a publican.

2. And hence some have advised, wholly to lay aside the use of those expressions; “because they have given so great offence.” But are they not found in the Oracles of God? If so, by what authority, can any Messenger of God lay them aside, even though all men should be offended? We have not so learned Christ; neither may we thus give place to the devil. Whatsoever God hath spoken, that will we speak, whether men will hear, or whether they will forbear: knowing that then alone can any Minister of Christ be “pure from the blood of all men,” when he hath “not shunned to declare unto them, all the counsel of God.”

3. We may not therefore lay these expressions aside, seeing they are the words of God, and not of man. But we may, and ought to explain the meaning of them; that those who are sincere of heart, may not err to the right hand or to the left, from the mark of the prize of their high calling.

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And this is the more needful to be done, because in the verse already repeated, the Apostle speaks of himself as not perfect: *Not, saith he, as though I were already perfect.* And yet immediately after, in the fifteenth verse, he speaks of himself, yea and many others, as perfect. *Let us, saith he, as many as be perfect, be thus minded.*

4. In order therefore to remove the difficulty arising from this seeming contradiction, as well as to give light to them who are pressing forward to the mark, and that those who are lame be not turned out of the way, I shall endeavour to shew,

First, In what sense Christians are *not*, and,
Secondly, In what sense they are *perfect*.

I. 1. In the first place I shall endeavour to shew, In what sense Christians are *not perfect*. And both from Experience and Scripture it appears, first, that they are not perfect in knowledge: they are not *so* perfect in this life, as to be free from ignorance. They know, it may be in common with other men, many things relating to the present world: and they know, with regard to the world to come, the general truths which God hath revealed. They know likewise (what the natural man receiveth not; for these things are spiritually discerned) "what manner of love it is, wherewith the Father hath loved them, that they should be called the sons of God;" they know the mighty working of his Spirit in their hearts, and the wisdom of his Providence, directing all their paths, and causing all things to work together for their good. Yea, they know in every circumstance of life, what the Lord requireth of them, and how to keep a conscience void of offence both toward God and toward man.

2. But innumerable are the things which they know not. "Touching the Almighty himself, they cannot search him out to perfection. Lo, these are but a part of his ways; but the thunder

of his power, who can understand?" They cannot understand, I will not say, how "there are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, and these three are one;" or how the eternal Son of God "took upon himself the form of a servant:" but not any one attribute, not any one circumstance of the Divine nature. Neither is it for them to know the times and seasons, when God will work his great works upon the earth; no, not even those which he hath in part revealed, by his servants and Prophets, since the world began. Much less do they know, when God having "accomplished the number of his elect will hasten his kingdom:" when "the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat."

3. They know not the reasons even of many of his present dispensations with the sons of men: but are constrained to rest here, though "clouds and darkness are round about him, righteousness and judgment are the habitation of his seat." Yea, often with regard to his dealings with themselves doth their Lord say unto them, "What I do, thou knowest not now; but thou shalt know hereafter." And how little do they know, of what is ever before them, of even the visible works of his hands? How "he spreadeth the North over the empty place, and hangeth the earth upon nothing?" How he unites all the parts of this vast machine by a secret chain which cannot be broken? So great is the ignorance, so very little the knowledge of even the best of men.

2.) 4. No one then is so perfect in this life, as to be free from ignorance. Nor, secondly, from mistake, which indeed is almost an unavoidable consequence of it; seeing those who *know but in part*, are ever liable to err, touching the things which they know not. It is true, the children of God do not mistake, as to the things essential to salvation. They do not "put darkness for light,

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or light for darkness, neither seek death in the error of their life." For they are *taught of God*, and the way which he teaches them, the way of holiness is so plain, that "the wayfaring man, though a fool need not err therein." But in things unessential to salvation, they do err, and that frequently. The best and wisest of men are frequently mistaken, even with regard to facts: believing those things not to have been, which really were, or those to have been done, which were not. Or suppose they are not mistaken as to the fact itself, they may be, with regard to its circumstances; believing them, or many of them, to have been quite different, from what in truth they were. And hence cannot but arise many farther mistakes. Hence they may believe either past or present actions, which were, or are evil, to be good; and such as were, or are good to be evil. Hence also they may judge, not according to truth, with regard to the characters of men: and that not only by supposing good men to be better, or wicked men to be worse than they are; but by believing them to have been, or to be good men, who were, or are very wicked: or perhaps, those to have been, or to be wicked men, who were, or are holy and unreprouable.

5. Nay with regard to the holy Scriptures themselves, as careful as they are to avoid it, the best of men are liable to mistake, and do mistake day by day: especially, with respect to those parts thereof, which less immediately relate to practice. Hence even the children of God are not agreed, as to the interpretation of many places in holy Writ: nor is their difference of opinion any proof that they are not the children of God on either side. But it is a proof, that we are no more to expect any living man to be *infallible*, than to be *omniscient*.

6. If it be objected to what has been observed under this and the preceding head, that St. John speaking to his brethren in the faith, says, "Ye have an unction from the holy One, and know

all things," 1 John ii. 20. The answer is plain, "Ye know all things that are needful for your soul's health." That the Apostle never designed, to extend this farther, that he could not speak it in an absolute sense, is clear, first, from hence, that otherwise he would describe the disciple as *above his Master*; seeing Christ himself, as man, knew not all things — "Of that hour, saith he, knoweth no man, no not the Son, but the Father only." It is clear, secondly, from the Apostle's own words that follow, "These things have I written unto you concerning them that deceive you:" as well as from his frequently repeated caution, "Let no man deceive you:" which had been altogether needless, had not those very persons, who had that unction from the holy One, been liable not to ignorance only, but to mistake also.

7. Even Christians therefore are not *so* perfect, as to be free either from ignorance or error. We may thirdly, add; nor from infirmities. Only let us take care to understand this word aright. Only let us not give that soft title to known sins, as the manner of some is. So, one man tells us, "Every man has his infirmity, and mine is drunkenness:" another has the infirmity of uncleanness; another of taking God's holy name in vain. And yet another has the infirmity of calling his brother, *Thou fool*, or returning *railing for railing*. It is plain, that, all you who thus speak, if ye repent not, shall with your infirmities, go quick into hell. But I mean hereby, not only those which are properly termed *bodily infirmities*, but all those inward or outward imperfections, which are not of a moral nature. Such are weakness or slowness of understanding, dulness or confusedness of apprehension, incoherency of thought, irregular quickness or heaviness of imagination. Such (to mention no more of this kind) is the want of a ready or retentive memory. Such in another kind are, those which are commonly in some measure consequent
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upon these: namely, slowness of speech, impropriety of language, ungracefulness of pronunciation; to which one might add a thousand nameless defects, either in conversation or behaviour. These are the infirmities which are found in the best of men, in a larger or smaller proportion. And from these none can hope to be perfectly freed, till the spirit returns to God that gave it.

8. Nor can we expect till then, to be wholly free from temptation. Such perfection belongs not to this life. It is true, there are those who being given up to work all uncleanness with greediness, scarce perceive the temptations which they resist not, and so seem to be without temptation. There are also many whom the wise enemy of souls seeing to be fast asleep in the dead form of godliness, will not tempt to gross sin, lest they should awake, before they drop into everlasting burnings. I know, there are also children of God, who being now justified freely, having found redemption in the blood of Christ, for the present feel no temptation. God hath said to their enemies, "Touch not mine anointed, and do my children no harm." And for this season, it may be for weeks or months, he causeth them to ride on high places, he beareth them as on eagles wings, above all the fiery darts of the wicked One. But this state will not last always, as we may learn from that single consideration, that the Son of God himself, in the days of his flesh, was tempted even to the end of his life. Therefore so let his servant expect to be; for "it is enough that he be as his Master."

9. Christian perfection therefore does not imply (as some men seem to have imagined) an exemption either from ignorance or mistake, or infirmities or temptations. Indeed it is only another term for holiness. They are two names for the same thing. Thus, every one that is holy, is in the Scripture sense perfect. Yet we may, lastly, observe, that

neither in this respect is there any absolute perfection on earth. There is no *perfection of degrees*, as it is termed; none which does not admit of a continual increase. So that how much soever any man has attained, or in how high a degree soever he is perfect, he hath still need to *grow in grace*, and daily to advance in the knowledge and love of God his Saviour.

II. 1. In what sense then are Christians perfect. This is what I shall endeavour, in the second place to shew. But it should be premised, that there are several stages in Christian life as in natural: some of the children of God being but new-born babes; others having attained to more maturity. And accordingly St. John, in his first Epistle (chap. ii. 12, &c.) applies himself severally, to those he terms little children, those he styles young men, and those whom he entitles fathers. "I write unto you, little children, saith the Apostle, because your sins are forgiven you:" because thus far you have attained, being *justified freely*, you have *peace with God through Jesus Christ*. "I write unto you, young men, because ye have overcome the wicked one;" or (as he afterwards addeth) "because ye are strong, and the Word of God abideth in you." Ye have quenched the fiery darts of the wicked one, the doubts and fears, wherewith he disturbed your first peace; and the witness of God that your sins are forgiven, now *abideth in your heart*. "I write unto you, Fathers, because ye have known him that is from the beginning." Ye have known both the Father and the Son, and the Spirit of Christ in your inmost soul. Ye are "perfect men, being grown up to the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ."

2. It is of these chiefly I speak in the latter part of this discourse. For these only are perfect Christians. But even babes in Christ are in such a sense perfect, or *born of God* (an expression taken

taken also in divers senses) as first, Not to commit sin. If any doubt of this privilege of the sons of God, the question is not to be decided by abstract reasonings, which may be drawn out into an endless length, and leave the point just as it was before. Neither is it to be determined by the experience of this or that particular person. Many may suppose they do not commit sin, when they do; but this proves nothing either way. To the law and to the testimony we appeal. "Let God be true, and every man a liar." By his Word will we abide, and that alone. Hereby we ought to be judged.

3. Now the word of God plainly declares, that even those who are justified, who are born again in the lowest sense, *do not continue in sin*; that they cannot *live any longer therein* (Rom. vi. 1, 2.) that they are "planted together in the Likeness of the death of Christ" (verse 5.) That their "old man is crucified with him, the body of sin being destroyed, so that henceforth they do not serve sin: that being dead with Christ, they are freed from sin, (verses 6, 7.) That they are *dead unto sin*, and *alive unto God*, (verse 11.) That *sin hath no more dominion over them*, who are *not under the law but under grace*; but that *these being free from sin, are become the servants of righteousness*, (verses 14, 18.)

4. The very least which can be implied in these words, is, that the persons spoken of therein, namely, all real Christians or believers in Christ, are made free from outward sin. And the same freedom which St. Paul here expresses in such variety of phrases, St. Peter expresses in that one (1 Pet. iv. 1, 2.) "He that hath suffered in the flesh, hath ceased from sin,—that he no longer should live—to the desires of men, but to the will of God." For this *ceasing from sin*, if it be interpreted in the lowest sense, as regarding only the outward behaviour, must denote the ceasing from
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the outward act, from any outward transgression of the law.

5. But most express are the well known words of St. John, in the third chapter of his first Epistle, verse the eighth, &c. "He that committeth sin is of the devil; for the devil sinneth from the beginning. For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil. Whosoever is born of God, doth not commit sin. For his seed remaineth in him, and he cannot sin, because he is born of God." And those in the fifth, ver. 18. "We know that whosoever is born of God sinneth not. But he that is begotten of God keepeth himself, and that wicked one touched him not."

6. Indeed it is said, this means only, He sinneth not *wilfully*; or he doth not commit sin *habitually*; or, *not as other men do*; or, *not as he did before*. But by whom is this said? By St. John? No. There is no such word in the text: nor in the whole chapter; nor in all this Epistle; nor in any part of his writings whatsoever. Why then, the best way to answer a bold assertion is, simply to deny it. And if any man can prove it from the word of God, let him bring forth his strong reasons.

7. And a sort of reason there is, which has been frequently brought to support these strange assertions, drawn from the examples recorded in the Word of God, "What, say they, did not Abraham himself commit sin, prevaricating and denying his wife? Did not Moses commit sin, when he provoked God, at the Waters of Strife? Nay, to produce one for all, did not even David, "the man after God's own heart," commit sin, in the matter of Uriah the Hittite, even murder and adultery?" It is most sure he did. All this is true. But what is it you would infer from hence? It may be granted, first, That David, in the general course of his life, was one of the holiest men among the Jews. And secondly, That the holiest men

men among the Jews *did sometimes commit sin*. But if you would hence infer, that *all Christians do, and must commit sin, as long as they live*: this consequence we utterly deny. It will never follow from those premisses.

8. Those who argue thus, seem never to have considered that declaration of our Lord (Matt. vi. 11.) " Verily I say unto you, among them that are born of women, there hath not risen a greater than John the Baptist. Notwithstanding, he ~~th~~ is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he." I fear indeed there are some who have imagined *the kingdom of heaven* here, to mean the kingdom of glory: as if the Son of God had just discovered to us, that the least glorified saint in heaven is greater than any man upon earth! To mention this is sufficiently to refute it. There can therefore no doubt be made but *the kingdom of heaven* here, (as in the following verse, where it is said to be *taken by force*) or, *the kingdom of God*, as St. Luke expresses it, is that kingdom of God on earth, whereunto all true believers in Christ, all real Christians belong. In these words then our Lord declares two things. First, That before his coming in the flesh, among all the children of men, there had not been one greater than John the Baptist: whence it evidently follows, that neither Abraham, David, nor any Jew, was greater than John. Our Lord, secondly declares, that he which is least in the kingdom of God (in that kingdom which he came to set up on earth, and which *the violent* now began to take by force) is greater than he. Not a *greater Prophet* (as some have interpreted the word) for this is palpably false in fact. But greater in the grace of God, and the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore we cannot measure the privileges of real Christians, by those formerly given to the Jews. *Their ministration* (or dispensation) we allow *was glorious*; but ours *exceeds in glory*. So that whosoever would
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bring down the Christian dispensation to the Jewish standard, whosoever gleans up the examples of weakness, recorded in the law and the prophets, and thence infers, that they who have *put on Christ*, are endued with no greater strength, doth greatly err, "neither knowing the Scriptures, nor the power of God."

9. "But are there not assertions in Scripture which prove the same thing, if it cannot be inferred from those examples? Does not the Scripture say expressly, *Even a just man sinneth seven times a day?*" I answer, No. The Scripture says no such thing. There is no such text in the Bible. That which seems to be intended is the sixteenth verse of the twenty-fourth chapter of the Proverbs: the words of which are these, *A just man falleth seven times, and riseth up again.* But this is quite another thing. For, first, the words, *a day*, are not in the text. So that if a just man falls seven times in his life, it is as much as is affirmed here. Secondly, Here is no mention of *falling into sin* at all; what is here mentioned is, *falling into temporal affliction.* This plainly appears from the verse before, the words of which are these: "Lay not wait, O wicked man, against the dwelling of the righteous; spoil not his resting-place." It follows, "For a just man falleth seven times, and riseth up again: but the wicked shall fall into mischief." As if he had said, "God will deliver him out of his trouble. But when thou fallest, there shall be none to deliver thee."

10. But however in other places, continue the objectors, Solomon does assert plainly, "There is no man that sinneth not," (1 Kings viii. 46. 2 Chron. vi. 36.) yea, "there is not a just man upon earth that doeth good, and sinneth not," (Eccles. vii. 20.) I answer, Without doubt, thus it was, in the days of Solomon. Yea, thus it was, from Adam to Moses, from Moses to Solomon, and from Solomon to Christ. There was then no
man

man that sinned not. Even from the day that sin entered into the world, there was not a just man upon earth that did good and sinned not, until the Son of God was manifested to take away our sins. It is unquestionably true, that "the heir, as long as he is a child, differeth nothing from a servant." And that *even so* they (all the holy men of old, who were under the Jewish dispensation) *were* during that infant-state of the Church, *in bondage under the elements of the world*. "But when the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law, that they might receive the adoption of sons;" that they might receive that "grace which is now made manifest by the appearing of our Saviour, Jesus Christ, who hath abolished death, and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel," (2 Tim. i. 10.) Now therefore they "are no more servants, but sons." So that whatsoever was the case of those under the law, we may safely affirm with St. John, that since the gospel was given, "He that is born of God, sinneth not."

11. It is of great importance to observe, and that more carefully than is commonly done, the wide difference that is between the Jewish and the Christian dispensation: and that ground of it which the same Apostle assigns in the seventh chapter of his gospel, ver. 38, &c. After he had there related those words of our blessed Lord, "He that believeth on me, as the Scripture had said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water," he immediately subjoins, "This spake he of the Spirit ὃ ἐμελλον λαμβάνειν οἱ πιστεύοντες εἰς αὐτόν, which they who should believe on him, were afterwards to receive. For the Holy Ghost was not yet given, because that Jesus was not yet glorified." Now the Apostle cannot mean here (as some have taught,) That the miracle working power of the Holy Ghost was not yet given. For this was given; our Lord had given

given it to all his Apostles, when he first sent them forth to preach the gospel. He then gave them power over unclean spirits to cast them out; power to heal the sick, yea, to raise the dead. But the Holy Ghost was not yet given in his sanctifying graces, as he was after Jesus was glorified. It was then when "he ascended up on high, and led captivity captive," that he "received those gifts for men, yea, even for the rebellious, that the Lord God might dwell among them." And when the day of Pentecost was fully come, then first it was, that they who "waited for the promise of the Father," were made more than conquerors over sin, by the Holy Ghost given unto them.

12. That this great salvation from sin was not given till Jesus was glorified, St. Peter also plainly testifies; where speaking of his brethren in the flesh, as now "receiving the end of their faith, the salvation of their souls," he adds (1 Pet. i. 9, 10. &c.) "Of which salvation the Prophets have enquired and searched diligently, who prophesied of the grace [i. e. *the gracious dispensation*] that should come unto you: searching what, or what manner of time the Spirit of Christ which was in them did signify, when it testified before hand the sufferings of Christ and the glory [*the glorious salvation*] that should follow. Unto whom it was revealed, That not unto themselves, but unto us they did minister, the things which are now reported unto you by them that have preached the gospel unto you, with the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven" (viz. at the day of Pentecost, and so unto all generations, into the hearts of all true believers.) On this ground, even "the grace which was brought unto them by the revelation of Jesus Christ," the Apostle might well build that strong exhortation, "Wherefore girding up the loins of your mind—as he which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation."

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13. Those who have duly considered these things must allow, that the privileges of Christians, are in nowise to be measured by what the Old Testament records concerning those who were under the Jewish dispensation: seeing the fulness of times is now come; the Holy Ghost is now given: the great salvation of God is brought unto men, by the revelation of Jesus Christ. The kingdom of heaven is now set up on earth; concerning which the Spirit of God declared of old (so far is David from being the pattern or standard of Christian Perfection) "He that is feeble among them at that day, shall be as David: and the house of David shall be as God, as the angel of the Lord before them," (Zech. xii. 8.)

14. If therefore you would prove that the Apostle's words, *he that is born of God sinneth not*, are not to be understood, according to their plain, natural, obvious meaning, it is from the New Testament you are to bring your proofs: else you will fight as one that beateth the air. And the first of these which is usually brought, is taken from the examples recorded in the New Testament. "The Apostles themselves (it is said) committed sin: nay the greatest of them, Peter and Paul: St. Paul, by his sharp contention with Barnabas; and St. Peter, by his dissimulation at Antioch." Well; suppose both Peter and Paul did then commit sin; what is it you would infer from hence? That all the other Apostles committed sin sometimes? There is no shadow of proof of this. Or, would you thence infer, That all the other Christians of the Apostolic age committed sin? Worse and worse; this is such an inference as one would imagine a man in his senses could never have thought of. Or, will you argue thus? "If two of the Apostles did once commit sin, then all other Christians, in all ages, do, and will commit sin as long as they live. Alas, my brother! A child of common understanding, would be ashamed

of such reasoning as this. Least of all can you with any colour of argument infer, "That any man must commit sin at all." No; God forbid we should thus speak. No necessity of sinning was laid upon them. The grace of God was surely sufficient for them. And it is sufficient for us at this day. With the temptation which fell on them, there was a way to escape; as there is to every soul of man in every temptation. So that whosoever is tempted to any sin, need not yield; for no man is tempted above that he is able to bear.

15. "But St. Paul besought the Lord thrice, and yet he could not escape from his temptation." Let us consider his own words literally translated. "There was given to me, a thorn in the flesh, an angel, or messenger of Satan, to buffet me. Touching this I besought the Lord thrice, that it or [*he*] might depart from me. And he said unto me, my grace is sufficient for thee. For my strength is made perfect in weakness. Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in these my weaknesses, that the strength of Christ may rest upon me. Therefore I take pleasure in weaknesses—for when I am weak, then am I strong."

16. As this Scripture is one of the strong holds of the patrons of sin, it may be proper to weigh it thoroughly. Let it be observed then, first, It does by no means appear, that this thorn, whatsoever it was, occasioned St. Paul to commit sin: much less laid him under any necessity of doing so. Therefore, from hence it can never be proved that any Christian must commit sin. Secondly, The ancient fathers inform us, it was bodily pain: a violent head-ach, saith Tertullian (*de pudic.*) to which both Chrysostom and St. Jerom agree. St. Cyprian * expresses it a little more generally in those terms, "Many and grievous torments of the flesh and of the body."† Thirdly, To this exactly agree the

* *De mortalitate.*

† *Carnis & corporis multa ac gravia tormenta.*

Apostle's own words, *A thorn to the flesh, to smite, beat or buffet me. My strength is made perfect in weakness.* Which same word occurs no less than four times in these two verses only. But, fourthly, Whatsoever it was, it could not be either inward or outward sin. It could no more be inward stirrings, than outward expressions, of pride, anger, or lust. This is manifest beyond all possible exception, from the words that immediately follow. "Most gladly will I glory in these my weaknesses, that the strength of Christ may rest upon me." What? Did he glory in pride, in anger, in lust? Was it through these *weaknesses*, that the strength of Christ rested upon him? He goes on; "Therefore I take pleasure in weaknesses; for when I am weak, then am I strong;" i. e. When I am weak *in body*, then am I strong *in spirit*. But will any man dare to say, When I am weak by pride or lust, then am I strong in spirit? I call you all to record this day, who find the strength of Christ resting upon you, can you glory in anger, or pride, or lust? Can you take pleasure in these infirmities? Do these weaknesses make you strong? Would you not leap into hell, were it possible, to escape them? Even by yourselves then judge, whether the Apostle could glory, and take pleasure in them? Let it be, lastly, observed, That this thorn was given to St. Paul above fourteen years before he wrote this Epistle: which itself was wrote several years before he finished his course. So that he had after this a long course to run, many battles to fight, many victories to gain, and great increase to receive in all the gifts of God, and the knowledge of Jesus Christ. Therefore from any spiritual weakness (if such had been) which he at that time felt, we could by no means infer, that he was never made strong, that Paul the aged, the father in Christ, still laboured under the same weaknesses: that he was in no higher state till the day of his death. From all which it appears that this instance

of St. Paul is quite foreign to the question, and does in no wise clash with the assertion of St. John, "He that is born of God, sinneth not."

17. "But does not St. James, directly contradict this? His words are, "In many things we offend all," ch. iii. ver. 2. And is not offending the same as committing sin?" In this place I allow it is. I allow the persons here spoken of did commit sin, yea, that they all committed many sins. But who are the persons here spoken of? Why, those many Masters or Teachers, whom God had not sent (probably the same vain men who taught that faith without works, which is so sharply re-proved in the preceding chapter.) Not the Apostle himself, nor any real Christian. That in the word *we* (used by a figure of speech, common in all other, as well as the inspired writings) the Apostle could not possibly include himself, or any other true believer, appears evidently, first, From the same word, in the ninth verse; "Therewith (saith he) bless we God, and therewith curse we men. Out of the same mouth proceedeth blessing and cursing." True? but not out of the mouth of the Apostle, nor of any one who is in Christ a new creature. Secondly, From the verse immediately preceding the text, and manifestly connected with it. "My brethren, be not many Masters (or teachers) knowing that we shall receive the greater condemnation. For in many things *we* offend all:" *We!* Who? Not the Apostles, nor true believers; but they who knew they should receive the greater condemnation, because of those many offences. But this could not be spoke of the Apostle himself, or of any who trod in his steps: seeing "there is no condemnation for them, who walk not after the flesh, but after the spirit." Nay, thirdly, The very verse itself proves, that *we offend all*, cannot be spoken, either of all men, or of all Christians; for in it there immediately follows the mention of a man who *offends not*, as the *we* first mentioned did:

from

from whom therefore he is professedly contradistinguished, and pronounced, *a perfect man*.

18. So clearly does St. James explain himself, and fix the meaning of his own words. Yet lest any one should still remain in doubt, St. John, writing many years after St. James, puts the matter entirely out of dispute, by the express declarations above recited. But here a fresh difficulty may arise. How shall we reconcile St. John with himself? In one place he declares, "Whosoever is born of God, doth not commit sin." And, again, "We know that he which is born of God sinneth not." And yet in another he saith, "If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us." And again, "If we say that we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us."

19. As great a difficulty as this may at first appear, it vanishes away if we observe first, That the tenth verse fixes the sense of the eighth: *If we say we have no sin*, in the former, being explained by, *If we say we have not sinned*, in the latter verse. Secondly, That the point under present consideration is not, whether we *have or have not sinned heretofore*; and neither of those verses assert, that we *do sin or commit sin* now. Thirdly, That the ninth verse explains both the eighth and tenth; *If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness*: as if he had said, "I have before affirmed, the blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth us from all sin. But let no man say, I need it not: I have no sin to be cleansed from. If we say *that we have no sin, that we have not sinned*, we deceive ourselves and make God a liar. But if we confess our sins, he is faithful and just, not only to forgive our sins, but also to cleanse us from all unrighteousness, that we may go and sin no more."

20. St. John therefore is well consistent with himself, as well as with the other holy writers: as

will yet more evidently appear, if we place all his assertions touching this matter in one view. He declares, First, The blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth us from all sin. Secondly, No Man can say, I have not sinned, I have no sin to be cleansed from. Thirdly, but God is ready both to forgive our past sins, and to save us from them for the time to come. Fourthly, "These things I write unto you, saith the Apostle, that you may not sin: but if any man should sin," or *have sinned* (as the word might be rendered) he need not continue in sin, seeing "we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous." Thus far all is clear. But lest any doubt should remain, in a point of so vast importance, the Apostle resumes this subject in the third chapter, and largely explains his own meaning. "Little children, saith he, let no man deceive you" [as though I had given any encouragement to those that continue in sin.] "He that doth righteousness, is righteous; even as he is righteous. He that committeth sin is of the devil: for the devil sinneth from the beginning. For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil. Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin: for his seed remaineth in him, and he cannot sin, because he is born of God. In this the children of God are manifest, and the children of the devil. (verse 7—10) Here the point, which till then might possibly have admitted of some doubt in weak minds, is purposely settled by the last of the inspired Writers, and decided in the clearest manner. In conformity therefore both to the doctrine of St. John, and to the whole tenor of the New Testament, we fix this conclusion, "A Christian is so far perfect, as not to commit sin."

21. This is the glorious privilege of every Christian, yea, though he be but *a babe in Christ*. But it is only of those who *are strong* in the Lord, "and have overcome the wicked one," or rather
of

of those who "have known him that is from the beginning," that it can be affirmed they are in such a sense perfect; as, secondly, to be freed from evil thoughts, and evil tempers. First, from evil or sinful thoughts. But here let it be observed, that thoughts concerning evil, are not always evil thoughts: that a thought concerning sin, and a sinful thought, are widely different. A man, for instance, may think of a murder which another has committed, and yet this is no evil or sinful thought. So our blessed Lord himself, doubtless thought of, or understood the thing spoken by the devil, when he said, "All this will I give thee, if thou wilt fall down and worship me." Yet had he no evil or sinful thought, nor indeed was capable of having any. And even hence it follows, that neither have real Christians. For "every one that is perfect is as his Master," (Luke vi. 40.) Therefore, if he was free from evil or sinful thoughts, so are they likewise.

22. And indeed, whence should evil thoughts proceed, in the servant who is *as his master*? "Out of the heart of man [*if at all*] proceed evil thoughts," (Mark vii. 21.) If therefore his heart be no longer evil, than evil thoughts can no longer proceed out of it. If the tree were corrupt, so would be the fruit; but the tree is good. The fruit therefore is good also, (Matt. xii. 33.) Our Lord himself bearing witness, "Every good tree bringeth forth good fruit. A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, as a corrupt tree cannot bring forth good fruit," Matt. vii. 17, 18.

23. The same happy privilege of real Christians, St. Paul asserts from his own experience. "The weapons of our warfare, saith he, are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds: casting down imaginations" [*or reasonings* rather, for so the word λογισμός signifies; all the reasonings of pride and unbelief against the declarations, promises or gifts of God] "and every high

high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God ; and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ," 2 Cor. x. 5, &c.

24. And as Christians indeed, are freed from evil thoughts, so are they, secondly, from evil tempers. This is evident from the above-mentioned declaration of our Lord himself : " The disciple is not above his Master ; but every one that is perfect shall be as his Master." He had been delivering just before some of the sublimest doctrines of Christianity, and some of the most grievous to flesh and blood. " I say unto you, love your enemies, do good to them which hate you : and unto him that smiteth thee on the one cheek, offer also the other." Now these he well knew the world would not receive ; and therefore immediately adds, " Can the blind lead the blind ? Will they not both fall into the ditch ?" As if he had said, " Do not confer with flesh and blood touching these things, with men void of spiritual discernment, the eyes of whose understanding God hath not opened, lest they and you perish together." In the next verse he removes the two grand objections, with which these wise fools meet us at every turn, " These things are too grievous to be borne," or, " They are too high to be attained : " Saying, " The disciple is not above his Master : " therefore, If I have suffered, be content to tread in my steps. And doubt ye not then, but I will fulfil my word : " For every one that is perfect, shall be as his Master." But his Master was free from all sinful tempers. So therefore is his disciples, even every real Christian.

25. Every one of these can say with St. Paul, " I am crucified with Christ. Nevertheless I live, Yet not I, but Christ liveth in me : " words that manifestly describe a deliverance from inward, as well as from outward sin. This is expressed both negatively, *I live not* : My evil nature, the body of sin is destroyed : and positively, *Christ liveth in me,*

me, and therefore all that is holy, and just, and good. Indeed both these, *Christ liveth in me*, and *I live not*, are inseparably connected. For "what communion hath light with darkness, or Christ with Belial?"

26. He therefore who liveth in true believers, hath "purified their hearts by faith:" inasmuch that "every one that hath Christ in him, the hope of glory, purifieth himself even as he is pure," (1 John iii. 3.) He is purified from pride; for Christ was lowly of heart. He is pure from self-will, or desire; for Christ desired only to do the will of his Father, and to finish his work. And he is pure from anger, in the common sense of the word: for Christ was meek and gentle, patient and long-suffering. I say, in the common sense of the word; for all anger is not evil. We read of our Lord himself (Mark iii. 5.) that he once "looked round with anger." But with what kind of anger? The next word shews; *συλλυπέμενος*, being at the same time grieved for the hardness of their hearts. So then he was angry at the sin, and in the same moment grieved for the sinners. Angry or displeased at the offence; but sorry, for the offenders. With anger, yea, hatred, he looked upon the thing; with grief and love upon the persons. Go thou that art perfect, and do likewise. *Be thus angry, and thou sinnest not*: feeling a displacency at every offence against God: but only love and tender compassion to the offender."

27. Thus doth Jesus "save his people from their sins:" and not only from outward sins, but also from the sins of their hearts; from evil thoughts and from evil tempers. "True, say some: we shall thus be saved from our sins; but not till death, not in this world." But how are we to reconcile this with the express words of St. John? "Herein is our love made perfect, that we may have boldness in the day of judgment, because as he is, so are we in this world." The Apostle here beyond all

all contradiction speaks of himself and other living Christians, of whom (as though he had foreseen this very evasion, and set himself to overturn it from the foundation) he flatly affirms, that not only at, or after death, but *in this world*, they are as their Master, 1 John iv. 17.

28. Exactly agreeable to this are his words in the first chapter of this Epistle, (verse 6, &c.) "God is light, and in him is no darkness at all. If we walk in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin." And again, "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." Now it is evident, the Apostle here also speaks of a deliverance wrought *in this world*. For he saith not, *the blood of Christ will cleanse* (at the hour of death or in the day of judgment) but it *cleanseth* (at the time present) *us* [living Christians] *from all sin*. And it is equally evident, that if *any sin* remain, we are not cleansed from *all sin*: if *any* unrighteousness remain in the soul, it is not cleansed from *all* unrighteousness. Neither let any sinner against his own soul say, that this relates to justification only, or the cleansing us from the guilt of sin; first, Because this is confounding together what the Apostle clearly distinguishes; who mentions first, *to forgive our sins*, and then *to cleanse us from all unrighteousness*. Secondly, Because this is asserting justification by works in the strongest sense possible: it is making all inward, as well as outward holiness necessarily previous to justification. For if the cleansing here spoken of is no other than the cleansing us from the guilt of sin, then we are not cleansed from guilt; i. e. are not justified, unless on condition of *walking in the light, as he is in the light*. It remains then, that Christians are saved in this world from all sin, from all unrighteousness: that they are now in such a sense perfect,

perfect, as not to commit sin, and to be freed from evil thoughts and evil tempers.

29. Thus hath the Lord fulfilled the things he spake by his holy Prophets, which have been since the world began: by Moses in particular, saying (Deut. xxx. 6.) "I will circumcise thine heart, and the heart of thy seed, to love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul:" by David crying out, "Create in me a clean heart, and renew a right spirit within me:" and most remarkably by Ezekiel, in those words, "Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean; from all your filthiness, and from all your idols will I cleanse you. A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments and do them.—Ye shall be my people, and I will be your God. I will also save you from all your uncleannesses.—Thus saith the Lord your God, in the day that I shall have cleansed you from all your iniquities—the heathen shall know that I the Lord build the ruined places,—I the Lord have spoken it,—and I will do it," Ezek. xxxvi. 25. &c.

30. "Having therefore these promises dearly beloved," both in the Law and in the Prophets, and having the prophetic word confirmed unto us in the gospel, by our blessed Lord and his Apostles: "Let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God." "Let us fear lest [so many promises being made us of entering into his rest [which he that hath entered into, has ceased from his own works] any of us should come short of it." "This one thing let us do; forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, let us press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus:" crying unto him day and night, till we also are "delivered from the bondage of corruption, into the glorious liberty of the sons of God."

The

THE PROMISE OF SANCTIFICATION.

EZEKIEL XXXVI. 25, &c.

By the Rev. CHARLES WESLEY.

- 1 **G**OD of all power, and truth, and grace,
Which shall from age to age endure;
Whose word, when heaven and earth shall pass,
Remains, and stands for ever sure:
- 2 Calmly to thee my soul looks up,
And waits thy promises to prove;
The object of my stedfast hope,
The seal of thine eternal love.
- 3 That I thy mercy may proclaim,
That all mankind the truth may see,
Hallow thy great and glorious name,
And perfect holiness in me.
- 4 Chose from the world, if now I stand
Adorn'd in righteousness divine,
If brought unto the promised land,
I justly call the Saviour mine:
- 5 Perform the work thou hast begun,
My inmost soul to thee convert:
Love me, for ever, love thine own,
And sprinkle with thy blood my heart.
- 6 Thy sanctifying Spirit pour,
To quench my thirst, and wash me clean;
Now, Father, let the gracious shower
Descend, and make me pure from sin.
- 7 Purge me from every sinful blot;
My idols all be cast aside:
Cleanse me from every evil thought;
From all the filth of self and pride.

8 Give

THE PROMISE OF SANCTIFICATION. 133

- 8 Give me a new, a perfect heart,
From doubt, and fear, and sorrow free;
The mind which was in Christ impart,
And let my spirit cleave to thee.
- 9 O take the heart of stone away,
(Thy rule it doth not, cannot own)
In me no longer let it stay:
O take away this heart of stone.
- 10 The hatred of the carnal mind
Out of my flesh at once remove;
Give me a tender heart, resign'd,
And pure, and fill'd with faith and love.
- 11 Within me thy good Spirit place,
Spirit of health, and love, and power;
Plant in me thy victorious grace,
And sin shall never enter more.
- 12 Cause me to walk in Christ my way,
And I thy statutes shall fulfil;
In every point thy law obey,
And perfectly perform thy will.
- 13 Hast thou not said, who canst not lie,
That I thy law shall keep and do?
Lord, I believe, though men deny:
They all are false; but thou art true.
- 14 O that I now, from sin releas'd,
Thy word might to the utmost prove!
Enter into the promis'd rest,
The Canaan of thy perfect love!
- 15 There let me ever, ever dwell;
Be thou my God, and I will be
Thy servant: O set to thy seal;
Give me eternal life in thee.
- 16 From all remaining filth within,
Let me in thee salvation have:
From actual, and from inbred sin,
My ransom'd soul persist to save.

134 THE PROMISE OF SANCTIFICATION.

17 Wash out my old original stain:
Tell me no more it cannot be,
Demons or men! The Lamb was slain,
His blood was all poured out for me.

18 Sprinkle it, Jesu, on my heart!
One drop of thy all cleansing blood
Shall make my sinfulness depart,
And fill me with the life of God.

19 Father, supply my every need:
Sustain the life thyself hast giv'n;
Call for the corn, the living bread,
The manna that comes down from heaven.

20 The gracious fruits of righteousness,
Thy blessings unexhausted store,
In me abundantly increase;
Nor let me ever hunger more.

21 Let me no more in deep complaint
"My leanness, O my leanness," cry!
Alone consum'd with pining want,
Of all my Father's children I!

22 The painful thirst, the fond desire,
Thy joyous presence shall remove,
While my full soul doth still require
Thy whole eternity of love.

23 Holy and true, and righteous Lord,
I wait to prove thy perfect will:
Be mindful of thy gracious word,
And stamp me with thy Spirit's seal.

24 Thy faithful mercies let me find,
In which thou causest me to trust;
Give me thy meek and lowly mind,
And lay my spirit in the dust.

25 Shew me how foul my heart hath been
When all renew'd by grace I am:
When thou hast emptied me of sin,
Shew me the fulness of my shame.

- 26 Open my faith's interior eye,
Display thy glory from above;
And all I am shall sink and die,
Lost in astonishment and love.
- 27 Confound, o'erpower me with thy grace,
I would be by myself abhorr'd,
(All might, all majesty, all praise,
All glory be to Christ my Lord!)
- 28 Now let me gain perfection's height!
Now let me into nothing fall!
Be less than nothing in my sight,
And feel that Christ is all in all!

S E R M O N XL.

ON WANDERING THOUGHTS.

2 CORINTHIANS X. 4.

“Bringing into captivity every Thought to the Obedience of Christ.”

1. **B**UT will God so “bring every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ,” that no wandering thought will find a place in the mind, even while we remain in the body? So some have vehemently maintained: yea, have affirmed, that none are perfected in love, unless they are so far perfected in understanding, that all wandering thoughts are done away: unless not only every affection and temper, be holy, and just, and good, but every individual thought which arises in the mind, be wise and regular.

2. This is a question of no small importance. For how many of those who fear God, yea and love him, perhaps with all their heart, have been greatly

distrest on this account? How many, by not understanding it right, have not only been distrest, but greatly hurt in their soul? Cast into unprofitable, yea, mischievous reasonings, such as slackened their motion towards God, and weakened them in running the race set before them. Nay many, through misapprehensions of this very thing, have cast away the precious gift of God. They have been induced first to doubt of and then to deny the work God had wrought in their souls; and hereby have grieved the Spirit of God, till he withdrew and left them in utter darkness.

3. How is it then, that amidst the abundance of books which have been lately published almost on all subjects, we should have none upon Wandering Thoughts? At least none that will at all satisfy a calm and serious mind? In order to do this in some degree, I purpose to enquire,

I. What are the several sorts of Wandering Thoughts?

II. What are the general occasions of them?

III. Which of them are sinful, and which not?

IV. Which of them we may expect and pray to be delivered from?

I. 1. I purpose to enquire, first, What are the several sorts of wandering thoughts? The particular sorts are innumerable; but in general, they are of two sorts, thoughts that wander from God, and thoughts that wander from the particular point we have in hand.

2. With regard to the former, all our thoughts are naturally of this kind. For they are continually wandering from God: we think nothing about him. God is not in all our thoughts: We are one and all, as the Apostle observes, "without God in the world." We think of what we love; but we do not love God: therefore we think not of him. Or if we are now and then constrained to think of him for a time, yet as we have no pleasure therein,

nay

may rather, as these thoughts are not only insipid, but distasteful and irksome to us, we drive them out as soon as we can, and return to what we love to think of. So that the world and the things of the world, what we shall eat, what we shall drink, what we shall put on: what we shall see, what we shall hear, what we shall gain: how we shall please our senses or our imagination, takes up all our time, and engrosses all our thoughts. So long therefore as we love the world, that is, so long as we are in our natural state, all our thoughts, from morning to evening, and from evening to morning, are no other than wandering thoughts.

3. But many times we are not only "without God in the world," but also fighting against him: as there is in every man by nature a "carnal mind which is enmity against God:" no wonder therefore that men abound with unbelieving thoughts: either saying in their hearts there is no God, or questioning, if not denying his power or wisdom, his mercy, or justice, or holiness. No wonder, that they so often doubt of his providence, at least, of its extending to all events: or that even though they allow it, they still entertain murmuring or repining thoughts. Nearly related to these and frequently connected with them, are proud and vain imaginations. Again: sometimes they are taken up with angry, malicious or revengeful thoughts: at other times, with airy scenes of pleasure, whether of sense or imagination: whereby the earthy sensual mind, becomes more earthy and sensual still. Now by all these they make flat war with God; these are wandering thoughts of the highest kind.

4. Widely different from these are the other sort of wandering thoughts: in which the heart does not wander from God, but the understanding wanders from the particular point it had then in view. For instance: I sit down to consider those words in the verse preceding the text, "the weapons of our

are not carnal, but mighty through God." I think, "this ought to be the case with all that are called Christians. But how far is it otherwise? Look round into almost every part of what is termed the Christian world! what manner of weapons are these using? In what kind of warfare are they engaged,

"While men, like fiends, each other tear
In all the hellish rage of war?"

See how these Christians love one another! Wherein are they preferable to Turks and Pagans? What abomination can be found among Mahometans or Heathens, which is not found among Christians also?" And thus my mind runs off, before I am aware, from one circumstance to another. Now all these are in some sense wandering thoughts. For although they do not wander from God, much less fight against him, yet they do wander from the particular point I had in view.

II. Such is the nature, such are the sorts (to speak rather usefully, than philosophically) of wandering thoughts. But what are the general occasions of them? This we are, in the second place to consider.

1. And it is easy to observe, that the occasion of the former sort of thoughts which oppose or wander from God, are in general, sinful tempers. For instance. *Why is not God in all the thoughts*, in any of the thoughts of a natural man? For a plain reason: be he rich or poor, learned or unlearned, he is an Atheist: (though not vulgarly so called) he neither knows nor loves God. Why are his thoughts continually wandering after the world? Because he is an idolater. He does not indeed worship an image, or bow down to the stock of a tree: yet is he sunk into equally damnable idolatry: he loves, that is, worships the world. He seeks happiness in the things that are seen, in the pleasures

pleasures that perish in the using. Why is it that his thoughts are perpetually wandering from the very end of his being, the knowledge of God in Christ? Because he is an unbeliever; because he has no faith, or at least, no more than a devil. So all these wandering thoughts easily and naturally spring from that evil root of unbelief.

2. The case is the same in other instances; pride, anger, revenge, vanity, lust, covetousness, every one of them occasion thoughts suitable to their own nature. And so does every sinful temper, of which the human mind is capable. The particulars it is hardly possible, nor is it needful to enumerate. It suffices to observe, that as many evil tempers as find a place in any soul, so many ways that soul will depart from God, by the worst kind of wandering thoughts.

3. The occasions of the latter kind of wandering thoughts, are exceeding various. Multitudes of them are occasioned, by the natural union between the soul and body. How immediately and how deeply is the understanding affected by a diseased body! Let but the blood move irregularly in the brain, and all regular thinking is at an end. Raging madness ensues, and then farewell to all evenness of thought. Yea, let only the spirits be hurried or agitated to a certain degree, and a temporary madness, a delirium prevents all settled thought. And is not the same irregularity of thought in a measure occasioned by every nervous disorder? So does "the corruptible body press down the soul, and cause it to muse about many things."

4. But does it only cause this in the time of sickness, of preternatural disorder? Nay, but more or less, at all times even in a state of perfect health. Let a man be ever so healthy, he will be more or less delirious, every four and twenty hours. For does he not sleep? And while he sleeps, is he not liable to dream? And who then is master of his own thoughts, or able to preserve the order and consistency

consistency of them? Who can then keep them fixt to any one point, or prevent their wandering from pole to pole?

5. But suppose we are awake, are we always so awake, that we can steadily govern our thoughts? Are we not unavoidably expos'd to contrary extremes, by the very nature of this machine, the body? Sometimes we are too heavy, too dull and languid, to pursue any chain of thought. Sometimes, on the other hand, we are too lively. The imagination, without leave, starts to and fro and carries us away, hither and thither, whether we will or no: and all this, from the merely natural motion of the spirits, or vibration of the nerves.

6. Father. How many wanderings of thought may arise, from those various associations of our ideas, which are made entirely without our knowledge, and independently on our choice? How these connexions are formed we cannot tell: but they are formed in a thousand different manners. Nor is it in the power of the wisest or holiest of men, to break these associations, or to prevent what is the necessary consequence of them, is matter of daily observation. Let the fire but touch one end of the train, and it immediately runs on to the other.

7. Once more. Let us fix our attention as studiously as we are able on any subject, yet let either pleasure or pain arise, especially if it be intense, and it will demand our immediate attention, and attach our thought to itself. It will interrupt the steadiest contemplation, and divert the mind from its favourite subject.

8. The occasions of wandering thoughts lie within, are wrought into our very nature. But they will likewise naturally and necessarily arise, from the various impulse of outward objects. Whatever strikes upon the organs of sense, the eye or ear, will raise a perception in the mind. And accordingly, whatever we see or hear, will break
in

in upon our former train of thoughts. Every man therefore that does any thing in our sight, or speaks any thing in our hearing, occasions our mind to wander more or less from the point it was thinking of before.

9. And there is no question but those evil spirits, who are continually seeking whom they may devour, make use of all the foregoing occasions, to hurry and distract our minds. Sometimes by one, sometimes by another of these means, they will harass and perplex us, and so far as God permits, interrupt our thoughts, particularly when they are engaged on the best subjects. Nor is this at all strange: they well understand the very springs of thought, and know on which of the bodily organs, the imagination, the understanding, and every other faculty of the mind more immediately depends. And hereby they know, how by affecting those organs, to affect the operations dependent on them. Add to this, that they can inject a thousand thoughts, without any of the preceding means: it being as natural for spirit to act upon spirit, as for matter to act upon matter. These things being considered, we cannot wonder, that our thought so often wanders from any point which we have in view.

III. 1. What kind of wandering thoughts are sinful, and what not, is the third thing to be enquired into. And first, All those thoughts which wander from God, which leave him no room in our minds, are undoubtedly sinful. For all these imply practical Atheism, and by these we are without God in the world. And so much more are all those which are contrary to God, which imply opposition or enmity to him. Such are all murmuring discontented thoughts, which say in effect, We will not have thee to rule over us: all unbelieving thoughts, whether with regard to his being, his attributes, or his providence. I mean his particular Providence over all things as well as
all

all persons in the universe: that without which "not a sparrow falls to the ground," by which "the hairs of our head are all numbered." For as to a general Providence (vulgarly so called) contradistinguished from a particular, it is only a decent, well-sounding word, which means just nothing.

2. Again. All thoughts which spring from sinful tempers, are undoubtedly sinful. Such, for instance, are those that spring from a revengeful temper, from pride, or lust, or vanity. "An evil tree cannot bring forth good fruit." Therefore if the tree be evil, so must the fruit be also.

3. And so must those be, which either produce or feed any sinful temper: those which either give rise to pride or vanity, to anger or love of the world, or confirm and increase these or any other unholy temper, passion, or affections. For not only whatever flows from evil is evil, but also whatever leads to it; whatever tends to alienate the soul from God, and to make or keep it earthly, sensual, and devilish.

4. Hence even those thoughts which are occasioned by weakness or disease, by the natural mechanism of the body, or by the laws of vital union, however innocent they may be in themselves, do nevertheless become sinful, when they either produce or cherish and increase in us any sinful temper: suppose the desire of the flesh, the desire of the eye, or the pride of life. In like manner the wandering thoughts which are occasioned by the words or actions of other men, if they cause or feed any wrong disposition, then commence sinful. And the same we may observe of those which are suggested or injected by the devil. When they minister to any earthly or devilish temper (which they do, whenever we give place to them, and thereby make them our own) then they are equally sinful, with the tempers to which they minister.

5. But abstracting from these cases, wandering thoughts, in the latter sense of the word, that is,

Thoughts

Thoughts wherein our understanding wanders from the point it has in view, are no more sinful than the motion of blood in our veins, or of the spirits in our brain, if they arise from an infirm constitution, or from some accidental weakness or distemper, they are as innocent as it is to have a weak constitution, or a distempered body. And surely no one doubts but a bad state of nerves, a fever of any kind, and either a transient or a lasting delirium, may consist with perfect innocence. And if they should arise in a soul which is united to an healthy body, either from the natural union between the body and soul, or from any of ten thousand changes, which may occur in the organs of the body, that minister to thought: in any of these cases they are as perfectly innocent as the causes from which they spring. And so they are when they spring from the casual, involuntary affections of our ideas.

6. If our thoughts wander from the point we had in view, by means of other men, variously affecting our senses, they are equally innocent still: for it is no more a sin, to understand what I see and hear, and in many cases cannot help seeing, hearing, and understanding, than it is to have eyes and ears. "But if the devil injects wandering thoughts, are not those thoughts evil?" They are troublesome, and in that sense evil; but they are not sinful. I do not know that he spoke to our Lord with an audible voice: perhaps he spoke to his heart only, when he said, "All these things will I give thee, if thou wilt fall down and worship me." But whether he spoke inwardly or outwardly, our Lord doubtless understood what he said. He had therefore a thought correspondent to those words." But was it a sinful thought? We know it was not. In him was no sin, either in action, or word, or thought. Nor is there any sin in a thousand thoughts of the same kind, which Satan may inject into any of our Lord's followers.

7. It follows, that none of these wandering thoughts (whatever unwary persons have affirmed, thereby grieving whom the Lord had not grieved) are inconsistent with perfect love. Indeed if they were, then not only sharp pain, but sleep itself would be inconsistent with it: sharp pain; for whenever this supervenes, whatever we were before thinking of, it will interrupt our thinking, and of course draw our thoughts into another channel: yea, and sleep itself, as it is a state of insensibility and stupidity: and such as is generally mixt with thoughts wandering over the earth, loose, wild and incoherent. Yet certainly these are consistent with perfect Love: so then are all wandering thoughts of this kind.

IV. 1. From what has been observed, it is easy to give a clear answer to the last question, What kind of wandering thoughts we may expect and pray to be delivered from?

From the former sort of wandering thoughts, those wherein the heart wanders from God; from all that are contrary to his will, or that leave us without God in the world, every one that is perfect in love, is unquestionably delivered. This deliverance therefore we may expect: this we may, we ought to pay for. Wandering thoughts of this kind imply unbelief, if not enmity against God. But both of these he will destroy, will bring utterly to an end. And indeed, from all sinful wandering thoughts we shall be absolutely delivered. All that are perfected in love are delivered from these; else they were not saved from sin. Men and devils will tempt them all manner of ways. But they cannot prevail over them.

2. With regard to the latter sort of wandering thoughts, the case is widely different. Till the cause is removed, we cannot in reason expect the effect should cease. But the causes or occasions of these will remain, as long as we remain in the body.

body. So long therefore we have all reason to believe, the effects will remain also.

3. To be more particular. Suppose a soul, however holy, to dwell in a distempered body. Suppose the brain be so thoroughly disordered, as that raging madness follows: will not all the thoughts be wild and unconnected, as long as that disorder continues? Suppose a fever occasions that temporary madness, which we term a delirium, can there be any just connection of thought, till that delirium is removed? Yea, suppose what is called a nervous disorder to rise to so high a degree, as to occasion at least a partial madness, will there not be a thousand wandering thoughts? And must not these irregular thoughts continue, as long as the disorder which occasions them?

4. Will not the case be the same, with regard to those thoughts that necessarily arise from violent pain? They will more or less, continue while that pain continues, by the inviolable order of nature. This order likewise will obtain, where the thoughts are disturbed, broken or interrupted, by any defect of the apprehension, judgment or imagination, flowing from the natural constitution of the body. And how many interruptions may spring from the unaccountable and involuntary association of our ideas? Now all these are directly or indirectly caused by the corruptible body pressing down the mind. Nor therefore can we expect them to be removed, till "this corruptible shall put on incorruption."

5. And then only, when we lie down in the dust, shall we be delivered from those wandering thoughts which are occasioned by what we see and hear, among those by whom we are now surrounded. To avoid these we must go out of the world. For as long as we remain therein, as long as there are men and women round about us, and we have eyes to see and ears to hear, the things which we daily see and hear, will certainly affect our mind, and

will more or less, break in upon and interrupt our preceding thoughts.

6. And as long as evil spirits roam to and fro in a miserable, disordered world, so long they will assault (whether they can prevail or no) every inhabitant of flesh and blood. They will trouble even those whom they cannot destroy: they will attack, if they cannot conquer. And from these attacks, of our restless, unwearied enemies, we must not look for an entire deliverance, till we are lodged "where the wicked cease from troubling, and where the weary are at rest."

7. To sum up the whole. To expect deliverance from those wandering thoughts, which are occasioned by evil spirits, is to expect that the devil should die or fall asleep; or at least should no more go about as a roaring lion. To expect deliverance from those which are occasioned by other men, is to expect either that men should cease from the earth; or that we should be absolutely secluded from them, and have no intercourse with them: or that having eyes we should not see, neither hear with our ears, but be as senseless as stocks or stones. And to pray for deliverance from those which are occasioned by the body, is in effect to pray that we may leave the body. Otherwise it is praying for impossibilities and absurdities; praying that God would reconcile contradictions, by continuing our union with a corruptible body, without the natural necessary consequences of that union. It is as if we should pray to be angels and men, mortal and immortal at the same time. Nay, but when that which is immortal is come, mortality is done away.

8. Rather let us pray, both with the spirit and with the understanding, that "all these things may work together for our good:" that we may suffer all the infirmities of our nature, all the interruptions of men, all the assaults and suggestions of evil spirits, and in all be "more than conquerors." Let us pray, That we may be delivered from all
sin,

sin, that both root and branch may be destroyed; that we may be "cleansed from all pollution of flesh and spirit," from every evil temper and word and work: that we may "love the Lord our God with all our heart, with all our mind, with all our soul, and with all our strength;" that all the fruits of the Spirit may be found in us; not only love, joy, peace; but also "long-suffering, gentleness, goodness; fidelity, meekness, temperance." Pray that all "these things may flourish and abound;" may increase in you more and more, till an abundant entrance be ministered unto you, into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord Jesus Christ!

SERMON XLI.

ON SATAN'S DEVICES.

2 CORINTHIANS II. 11.

We are not ignorant of his devices."

1. **T**HE devices whereby the wise god of this world, labours to destroy the children of God, or at least to torment whom he cannot destroy, to perplex and hinder them in running the race which is set before them, are numberless as the stars of heaven or the sand upon the sea-shore. But it is of one of them only that I now propose to speak, (although exerted in various ways) whereby he endeavours to divide the gospel against itself, and by one part of it to overthrow the other.

2. The inward kingdom of heaven, which is set up in the heart of all that repent and believe the gospel, is no other than "righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Ghost." Every babe in Christ

knows we are made partakers of these, the very hour that we believe in Jesus. But these are only the first fruits of his Spirit: the harvest is not yet. Although these blessings are inconceivably great, yet we trust to see greater than these. We trust to love the Lord our God, not only as we do now, with a weak though sincere affection, but "with all our heart, with all our mind, with all our soul, and with all our strength." We look for power to "rejoice evermore, to pray without ceasing and in every thing to give thanks;" knowing "this is the will of God concerning us in Christ Jesus."

3. We expect to be "made perfect in love," in that which *casts out* all painful *fear* and all desire, but that of glorifying him we love, of loving and serving him more and more. We look for such an increase in the experimental knowledge and love of God our Saviour, as will enable us, always to "walk in the light as he is in the light." We believe the whole *mind* will be in us *which was also in Christ Jesus*: that we shall love every man so as to be ready "to lay down our life for his sake:" so as by this love to be freed from anger and pride, and from every unkind affection. We expect to be "cleansed from all our idols, from all filthiness whether of flesh or spirit:" to be "saved from all our uncleannesses," inward or outward; to be "purified as he is pure."

4. We trust in his promise who cannot lie, that the time will surely come, when in every word and work we shall do his blessed will on earth as it is done in heaven: when all our conversation shall be seasoned with salt, all meet to minister grace to the hearers: when whether we eat or drink or whatever we do, it shall be done to the glory of God: when all our words and deeds shall be "in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks unto God, even to God the Father through him."

5. Now this is the grand device of Satan, to destroy the first work of God in the soul, or at least,

to

to hinder its increase, by our expectation of that greater work. It is therefore my present design, first, To point out the several ways whereby he endeavours this: and, secondly, To observe how we may retort these fiery darts of the wicked One: how we may rise the higher by what he intends for an occasion of our falling.

I. 1. I am, first, to point out the several ways whereby Satan endeavours to destroy the first work of God in the soul, or at least, to hinder its increase, by our expectation of that greater work. And, 1. He endeavours to damp our joy in the Lord, by the consideration of our own vileness, sinfulness, unworthiness, added to this, That there must be a far greater change than is yet, or we cannot see the Lord. If we knew we must remain as we are, even to the day of our death, we might possibly draw a kind of comfort, poor as it was, from that necessity. But as we know, we need not remain in this state, as we are assured, there is a greater change to come, and that unless sin be all done away in this life, we cannot see God in glory: that subtle adversary often damps the joy we should otherwise feel in what we have already attained, by a perverse representation of what we have not attained, and the absolute necessity of attaining it. So that we cannot rejoice in what we have, because there is more which we have not. We cannot rightly taste the goodness of God, who hath done so great things for us, because there are so much greater things, which as yet he hath not done. Likewise the deeper conviction God works in us of our present unholiness, and the more vehement desire we feel in our heart, of the entire holiness he hath promised, the more are we tempted to think lightly of the present gifts of God, and to undervalue what we have already received, because of what we have not received.

2. If he can prevail thus far, if he can damp our joy, he will soon attack our peace also. He will suggest, "Are you fit to see God? He is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity." How then can you flatter yourself, so as to imagine he beholds you with approbation? God is holy: you are unholy. What communion hath light with darkness? How is it possible that you, unclean as you are, should be in a state of acceptance with God? You see indeed the mark, the prize of your high calling. But do you not see, it is afar off? How can you presume then to think, that all your sins are already blotted out? How can this be, until you are brought nearer to God, until you bear more resemblance to him?" Thus will he endeavour, not only to shake your peace, but even to overturn the very foundation of it: to bring you back by insensible degrees, to the point from whence you set out first: even to seek for justification by works, or by your own righteousness; to make something in you the ground of your acceptance, or at least necessarily previous to it.

3. Or if we hold fast, "other foundation can no man lay than that which is laid, even Jesus Christ;" and I am "justified freely by God's grace, through the redemption which is in Jesus:" yet he will not cease to urge, "But the tree is known by its fruits. And have you the fruits of justification? Is that mind in you which was in Christ Jesus? Are you dead unto sin and alive unto righteousness? Are you made conformable to the death of Christ, and do you know the power of his resurrection?" And then, comparing the small fruits we feel in our souls, with the fulness of the promises, we shall be ready to conclude, Surely God hath not said, that my sins are forgiven me! Surely I have not received the remission of my sins; for what lot have I among them that are sanctified?

4. More

4. More especially in the time of sickness and pain, he will press this with all his might. "Is it not the word of Him that cannot lie, without holiness no man shall see the Lord? But you are not holy. You know it well; you know holiness is the full image of God. And how far is this above, out of your sight? You cannot attain unto it. Therefore all your labour has been in vain. All these things you have suffered in vain. You have spent your strength for nought. You are yet in your sins and must therefore perish at the last." And thus, if your eye be not steadily fixt on him who hath borne all your sins, he will bring you again under that *fear of death*, whereby you was so long *subject to bondage*: and by this means impair, if not wholly destroy, your peace as well as joy in the Lord.

5. But his masterpiece of subtilty is still behind. Not content to strike at your peace and joy, he will carry his attempts farther yet: he will level his assault against your righteousness also. He will endeavour to shake, yea, if it be possible, to destroy the holiness you have already received, by your very expectation of receiving more, of attaining all the image of God.

6. The matter wherein he attempts this, may partly appear from what has been already observed. For, first, By striking at our joy in the Lord, he strikes likewise at our holiness: seeing joy in the Holy Ghost is a precious means of promoting every holy temper; a choice instrument of God whereby he carries on much of his work in a believing soul. And it is a considerable help not only to inward, but also to outward holiness. It strengthens our hands to go on in the work of faith and in the labour of love; manfully to "fight the good fight of faith, and to lay hold on eternal life." It is peculiarly designed of God to be a balance both against inward and outward sufferings: to *lift up the hands that hang down and confirm the feeble knees.*

knees. Consequently, whatever damps our joy in the Lord, proportionably obstructs our holiness. And therefore so far as Satan shakes our joy, he hinders our holiness also.

7. The same effect will ensue, if he can by any means either destroy or shake our peace. For the peace of God is another precious means of advancing the image of God in us. There is scarce a greater help to holiness than this, a continual tranquillity of spirit, the evenness of a mind stayed upon God; a calm repose in the blood of Jesus. And without this, it is scarce possible to grow in grace, and in the vital knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. For all fear (unless the tender, filial fear) freezes and benumbs the soul. It binds all the springs of spiritual life, and stops all motion of the heart toward God. And doubt, as it were, bemires the soul, so that it sticks fast in the deep clay. Therefore in the same proportion as either of these prevail, our growth in holiness is hindered.

8. At the same time that our wise adversary endeavours, to make our conviction of the necessity of perfect love, an occasion of shaking our peace by doubts and fears, he endeavours to weaken, if not destroy our faith. Indeed these are inseparably connected, so that they must stand or fall together. So long as faith subsists, we remain in peace; our heart stands fast, while it believes in the Lord. But if we let go our faith, our filial confidence in a loving pardoning God, our peace is at an end, the very foundation on which it stood being overthrown. And this is the only foundation of holiness as well as of peace. Consequently whatever strikes at this, strikes at the very root of all holiness. For without this faith, without an abiding sense, that Christ loved me and gave himself for me, without a continuing conviction, that God for Christ's sake is merciful to me a sinner, it is impossible that I should love God. "We love him, because he

first

first loved us," and in proportion to the strength and clearness of our conviction, that he hath loved us and accepted us in his Son. And unless we love God, it is not possible that we should love our neighbour as ourselves: nor consequently, that we should have any right affections, either toward God or toward man. It evidently follows, that whatever weakens our faith, must in the same degree obstruct our holiness. And this is not only the most effectual, but also the most compendious way of destroying all holiness. Seeing it does not affect any one Christian temper, any single grace or fruit of the Spirit, but so far as it succeeds, tears up the very root of the whole work of God.

9. No marvel therefore, that the ruler of the darkness of this world, should here put forth all his strength. And so we find by experience. For it is far easier to conceive than it is to express the unspeakable violence, wherewith this temptation is frequently urged on them, who hunger and thirst after righteousness. When they see in a strong and clear light, on the one hand, the desperate wickedness of their own hearts; and on the other hand, the unspotted holiness to which they are called in Christ Jesus: on the one hand, the depth of their own corruption, of their total alienation from God; on the other, the height of the glory of God, the image of the Holy One wherein they are to be renewed: there is many times no spirit left in them; they could almost cry out, With God this is impossible. They are ready to give up both faith and hope, to cast away that very confidence, whereby they are to overcome all things, and to do all things through Christ strengthening them: whereby, "after they have done the will of God, they are to receive the promise."

10. And if they "hold fast the beginning of their confidence unto the end," they shall undoubtedly receive the promise of God reaching through both time and eternity. But here is another snare laid

laid for our feet. While we earnestly pant for that part of the promise which is to be accomplished here, "for the glorious liberty of the children of God," we may be led unawares, from the consideration of the glory which shall hereafter be revealed. Our eye may be insensibly turned aside from that crown which the righteous Judge hath promised to give at that day, "to all that love his appearing:" and we may be drawn away from the view of that incorruptible inheritance which is reserved in heaven for us. But this also would be a loss to our souls, and an obstruction to our holiness. For to walk in the continual sight of our goal, is a needful help in our running the race that is set before us. This it was, the having "respect unto the recompence of reward," which of old time encouraged Moses, rather "to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season: esteeming the reproach of Christ, greater riches than the treasures of Egypt." Nay it is expressly said of a greater than him, That "for the joy that was set before him, he endured the cross and despised the shame, till he sat down at the right hand of the throne of God." Whence we may easily infer, how much more needful for us, is the view of that joy set before us, that we may endure whatever crosses the wisdom of God lays upon us, and press on through holiness to glory.

11. But while we are reaching to this, as well as to that glorious liberty which is preparatory to it, we may be in danger of falling into another snare of the devil, whereby he labours to intangle the children of God. We may take too much *thought for to-morrow*, so as to neglect the improvement of to-day. We may so expect perfect love, as not to use that, which is already shed abroad in our hearts. There have not been wanting instances of those, who have greatly suffered hereby. They were so taken up with what they were to receive hereafter,

hereafter, as utterly to neglect what they had already received. In expectation of having five talents more, they buried their one talent in the earth. At least they did not improve it as they might have done, to the glory of God and the good of their own souls.

12. Thus does the subtle adversary of God and man, endeavour to make void the counsel of God, by dividing the gospel against itself, and making one part of it overthrow the other: while the first work of God in the soul is destroyed by the expectation of his perfect work. We have seen several of the ways wherein he attempts this, by cutting off, as it were, the springs of holiness. But this he likewise does more directly, by making that blessed hope an occasion of unholy tempers.

13. Thus, whenever our heart is eagerly athirst for all the great and precious promises, when we pant after the fulness of God, as the hart after the water-brook, when our soul breaketh out in fervent desire, "Why are his chariot-wheels so long a-coming?" He will not neglect the opportunity, tempting us to murmur against God. He will use all his wisdom and all his strength, if haply in an unguarded hour, we may be influenced to repine at our Lord, for thus delaying his coming. At least, he will labour to excite some degree of fretfulness or impatience: and perhaps of envy at those, whom we believe to have already attained the prize of our high calling. He well knows, that by giving way to any of these tempers, we are pulling down the very thing we would build up. By thus following after perfect holiness, we become more unholy than before. Yea, there is great danger that our last state should be worse than the first: like them of whom the Apostle speaks, in those dreadful words, "It had been better they had never known the way of righteousness, than after they had known it to turn back from the holy commandment delivered to them."

14. And

14. And from hence he hopes to reap another advantage, even to bring up an evil report of the good way. He is sensible, how few are able to distinguish (and too many are not willing so to do) between the accidental abuse and the natural tendency of a doctrine. These therefore, will he continually blend together, with regard to the doctrine of Christian perfection: in order to prejudice the minds of unwary men against the glorious promises of God. And how frequently, how generally, I had almost said, how universally has he prevailed herein? For who is there that observes any of these accidental ill effects of this doctrine, and does not immediately conclude, This is its natural tendency? And does not readily cry out, "See, these are the fruits (meaning the natural, necessary fruits) of such doctrine!" Not so. They are fruits which may accidentally spring from the abuse of a great and precious truth. But the abuse of this, or any other Scriptural doctrine, does by no means destroy its use. Neither can the unfaithfulness of man, perverting his right way, make the promise of God of none effect. No: let God be true and every man a liar. The word of the Lord it shall stand. "Faithful is He that hath promised: He also will do it." Let us not then be *removed from the hope of the gospel*. Rather let us observe, which was the second thing proposed, how we may retort these fiery darts of the wicked One: how we may rise the higher by what he intends for an occasion of our falling.

II. 1. And, first, Does Satan endeavour to damp our joy in the Lord, by the consideration of your sinfulness, added to this, That without entire, universal holiness, no man can see the Lord? You may cast back this dart upon his own head, while through the grace of God, the more you feel of your own vileness, the more you rejoice in confident hope, that all this shall be done away. While you hold fast this hope, every evil temper you feel,
though

though you hate it with a perfect hatred, may be a means, not of lessening your humble joy, but rather of increasing it. "This and this, may you say, shall likewise perish from the presence of the Lord. Like as the wax melted at the fire, so shall this melt away before his face." By this means the greater the change is, which remains to be wrought in your soul, the more may you triumph in the Lord and rejoice in the God of your salvation: who hath done so great things for you already, and will do so much greater things than these.

2. Secondly, The more vehemently he assaults your peace with that suggestion, "God is holy, you are unholy: you are immensely distant from that holiness, without which you cannot see God: how then can you be in the favour of God? how can you fancy you are justified?" Take the more earnest heed to hold fast that, "Not by works of righteousness which I have done, I am found in him:" I am "accepted in the Beloved;" "not having my own righteousness" (as the cause either in whole or in part of our justification before God) "but that which is by faith in Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith." O bind this about your neck: write it upon the table of thy heart. Wear it as a bracelet upon thy arm, as frontlets between thine eyes: I am "justified freely by his grace, through the redemption that is in Jesus Christ." Value and esteem more and more that precious truth, "By grace we are saved through faith." Admire more and more the free grace of God, in so loving the world as to give "his only Son, that whosoever believeth on him might not perish but have everlasting life." So shall the sense of the sinfulness you feel on the one hand, and of the holiness you expect on the other, both contribute to establish your peace and to make it flow as a river. So shall that peace flow on with an even stream, in spite of all those mountains of ungodliness, which shall become a plain in the day when

the Lord cometh, to take full possession of your heart. Neither will sickness or pain, or the approach of death, occasion any doubt or fear. You know a day, an hour, a moment with God is as a thousand years. He cannot be straightened for time, wherein to work whatever remains to be done in your soul. And God's time is always the best time. Therefore be thou careful for nothing. Only make thy request known unto him, and that not without doubt or fear, but thanksgiving: as being previously assured, he cannot withhold from thee any manner of thing that is good.

3. Thirdly, The more you are tempted to give up your shield, to cast away your faith, your confidence in his love, so much the more take heed that you hold fast that whereunto you have attained. So much the more labour to stir up the gift of God which is in you. Never let that slip, I have "an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous:" and "the life I now live, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me." Be this thy glory and crown of rejoicing. And see that no one take thy crown. Hold that fast, "I know that my Redeemer liveth, and shall stand at the latter day upon the earth." And I now "have redemption in his blood, even the forgiveness of sins." Thus, being filled with all peace and joy in believing, press on in the peace and joy of faith to the renewal of thy whole soul, in the image of him that created thee. Mean while cry continually to God, that thou mayest see that prize of thy high calling, not as Satan represents it, in a horrid dreadful shape, but in its genuine native beauty: not as something that must be, or thou wilt go to hell, but as what may be, to lead thee to heaven. Look upon it as the most desirable gift, which is in all the stores of the rich mercies of God. Beholding it in the true point of light, thou wilt hunger after it more and more: thy whole soul will be athirst for God, and for
this

this glorious conformity to his likeness. And having received a good hope of this, and strong consolation through grace, thou wilt no more be weary or faint in thy mind, but wilt follow on till thou attainest.

4. In the same power of faith, press on to glory. Indeed this is the same prospect still. God hath joined from the beginning pardon, holiness, heaven. And why should man put them asunder? O beware of this! Let not one link of the golden chain be broken. God for Christ's sake hath forgiven me. He is now renewing me in his own image. Shortly he will make me meet for himself, and take me to stand before his face. I whom he hath justified through the blood of his Son, being thoroughly sanctified by his Spirit, shall quickly ascend to the "New Jerusalem, the city of the living GOD." Yet a little while and I shall "come to the general assembly and church of the first-born, and to God the Judge of all, and to JESUS the Mediator of the new covenant." How soon will these shadows flee away, and the day of eternity dawn upon me! How soon shall I drink of "the river of the water of life, going out of the throne of God and of the Lamb?" There all his servants shall praise him and shall see his face, and his name shall be upon their foreheads. And no night shall be there; and they have no need of a candle or the light of the sun. For the LORD GOD enlighteneth them and they shall reign for ever and ever."

5. And if you thus "taste of the good word and the powers of the world to come," you will not murmur against God, because you are not yet meet for the inheritance of the saints in light. Instead of repining at your not being wholly delivered, you will praise God for thus far delivering you. You will magnify God for what he hath done, and take it as an earnest of what he will do. You will not fret against him, because you are not yet renewed, but bless him because you shall be; and

because *now is your salvation* from all sin, *nearer than when you first believed*. Instead of uselessly tormenting yourself because the time is not fully come, you will calmly and quietly wait for it, knowing that it *will come and will not tarry*. You may therefore the more cheerfully endure as yet, the burden of sin that still remains in you, because it will not always remain. Yet a little while and it shall be clean gone. Only "tarry thou the Lord's leisure: be strong, and he shall comfort thy heart, and put thou thy trust in the LORD."

6. And if you see any who appear (so far as man can judge, but God alone searcheth the hearts) to be already partakers of their hope, already *made perfect in love*: far from envying the grace of God in them, let it rejoice and comfort your heart. Glorify GOD for their sake. "If one member is honoured," shall not "all the members rejoice with it?" Instead of jealousy or evil surmising concerning them, praise God for the consolation. Rejoice in having a fresh proof of the faithfulness of God in fulfilling all his promises. And stir yourself up the more, to "apprehend that for which you also are apprehended of Christ Jesus."

7. In order to this, redeem the time. Improve the present moment. Buy up every opportunity of growing in grace, or of doing good. Let not the thought of receiving more grace to-morrow, make you negligent of to-day. You have one talent now. If you expect five more, so much then rather improve that you have. And the more you expect to receive hereafter, the more labour for God now. Sufficient for the day is the grace thereof. God is now pouring his benefits upon you. Now approve yourself a faithful steward, of the present grace of God. Whatever may be to-morrow, give all diligence to-day, to "add to your faith courage, temperance, patience, brotherly kindness and the fear of God," till you attain that pure and perfect love. Let *these things be now in you*
and

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and abound. Be not now slothful or unfruitful.
“So shall an entrance be ministered into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord Jesus Christ.”

6. Lastly. If in time past you have abused this blessed hope of being holy as he is holy, yet do not therefore cast it away. Let the abuse cease, the use remain. Use it now to the more abundant glory of God and profit of your own soul. In stedfast faith, in calm tranquility of spirit, in full assurance of hope, rejoicing evermore for what God hath done, *press ye on unto perfection.* Daily growing in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ, and going on from strength to strength, in resignation, in patience, in humble thankfulness for what ye have attained, and for which ye shall, run the race set before you, *looking unto Jesus*, till through perfect love ye enter into his glory!

S E R M O N XLII.

On the Occasion of the DEATH of the
Rev. Mr. JOHN FLETCHER.

PSALM XXXVII. 37.

“Mark the perfect man, and behold the upright,
for the end of that man is peace.”

IN the preceding verses taken together with this, there is a beautiful contrast, between the death of a wicked and that of a good man. “I myself,” says the Psalmist, “have seen the ungodly in great power, and flourishing like a green bay-tree. I went by and lo he was gone: I sought him but his place could no where be found.” Dost thou desire to be found happy, both in life and in death?

Then "keep innocency, and take heed unto the thing that is right: for that shall bring a man peace at the last." The words are rendered in the new translation, with far more force and elegance. "Mark the perfect man, and behold the upright! for the end of that man is peace." It is not improbable that David, while he uttered these words, had a particular instance before his eyes. Such an instance was that of the great and good man, whom God has not long ago taken to himself.

In discoursing on these words, I purpose first, briefly to enquire, who is the person here spoken of, *the perfect, the upright man*? I will endeavour, secondly to explain the promise, *That shall bring a man peace at the last*: or as it is express in the other version, *The end of that man is peace*. I will then, with the divine assistance, shew a little more at large, in how glorious a manner it was fulfilled in the end of that *perfect and upright man* who has been lately removed from us.

I. 1. I am first, briefly to enquire, who is the person that is here spoken of, *the upright and perfect man*? In speaking on this head, I shall not endeavour to describe the character of an upright Jew: such as David himself was, or any of those holy men that lived under the Mosaic Dispensation: it more nearly imports us to consider such an upright man, as are those that live under the Christian Dispensation, such as have lived and died since *life and immortality* have been *brought to light by the Gospel*.

2. In this sense, he is a perfect and upright man, who believes in the name of the Son of God: he is one in whom it has pleased the Father, to reveal the Son of his love: and who consequently is able to declare, "the life that I now live, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me." He is one that finds "the Spirit of God witnessing with his spirit, that he is a child
of

of God:" and unto whom "Jesus Christ is made of God, wisdom and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption."

3. This faith will undoubtedly *work by love*. Accordingly every Christian Believer has "the love of God shed abroad in his heart, by the Holy Ghost which is given unto him." And loving God, he loves his Brother also: his good will extends to every child of man. By this, as well as by the fruits of love, lowliness, meekness, and resignation, he shews that there is the same *mind in him which was in Christ Jesus*.

4. As to his outward behaviour, the upright Christian Believer, is blameless and unrepachable. He is holy, as Christ that has called him is holy in all manner of conversation: ever labouring to have a conscience void of offence, toward God and toward man. He not only avoids all outward sin, but "abstains from all appearance of evil." He steadily walks in all the public and private ordinances of the Lord blameless. He is zealous of good works; as he hath time doing good, in every kind and degree, to all men. And in the whole course of his life, he pursues one invariable rule, whether he eats or drinks, or whatever he does, to do all to the glory of God.

II. And surely *the end of that man is peace*: the meaning of which words we are now, in the second place to consider.

I do not conceive this immediately to refer to that glorious Peace, which is prepared for him in the presence of God to all eternity; but rather to that which he will enjoy in the present world, before his spirit returns to God that gave it. Neither does it seem directly to refer to outward peace or deliverance from outward trouble: although it is true, many good men, who have been long buffeted by adversity, and troubled on every side, have experienced an entire deliverance from it, and enjoyed

joyed a remarkable calm before they went hence. But this seems chiefly to refer to inward peace, even that "peace of God which passeth all understanding." Therefore it is no wonder, that it cannot be fully and adequately expressed in human language. We can only say, it is an unspeakable calmness and serenity of spirit, a tranquility in the blood of Christ, which keeps the souls of the Believers, in their latest hour, even as a garrison keeps a city; which keeps not only their hearts, all their passions and affections, but also their minds, all the motions of their understanding and imagination, and all the workings of their reason, in Christ Jesus. This peace they experienced in a higher or lower degree (suppose they continued in the faith) from the time they first found redemption in the blood of Jesus, even the forgiveness of sins. But when they have nearly finished their course, it generally flows as a river, even in such a degree, as it had not before entered into their hearts to conceive. A remarkable instance of this, out of a thousand, occurred many years ago. Enoch Williams, one of the first of our Preachers that was stationed at Cork (who had received this peace when he was eleven years old, and never lost it for an hour) after he had rejoiced in God with joy unspeakable, during the whole course of his illness, was too much exhausted to speak many words, but just said "Peace! Peace!" and died.

III. So was the Scripture fulfilled. But it was far more gloriously fulfilled in that late eminent servant of God; as will clearly appear if we consider a few circumstances first of his life, and secondly, in his triumphant death.

1. Indeed we have as yet but a very imperfect knowledge of his life. We know little more of his early years, than that he was from his infancy so remarkably regardless of food, that he would scarce take enough to sustain life; and that he had
always

always much of the fear of God, and a real sense of religion. He was born September 12, in the year 1729, at Nyon, in Switzerland, of a very reputable family. He went through the useful course of academical studies, in the University of Geneva. One of his Uncles who was at that time a General Officer in the Imperial service, then invited him into the same service, promising to procure him a commission. But just as he came into Germany, the war was at an end. Being so far on his way, he was then invited into Holland, by another Uncle, who had a little before been desired by a correspondent in England, to procure a Tutor for a Gentleman's sons. He asked Mr. Fletcher whether he was willing to go into England, and undertake this office? He consented and accordingly went over to England, and took the care of Mr. Hill's two sons, at Tern in Shropshire: and he continued in that office, till the young gentlemen went to the University.

2. When Mr. Hill went up to London, to attend the Parliament, he took his Lady and Mr. Fletcher with him. While they were dining at St. Alban's, he walked out into the town, but did not return, till the coach was set out for London. However a saddle-horse being left he came after, and overtook them the same evening. Mrs. Hill asking him, "Why he stayed behind?" He said, "I was walking through the market-place, and I heard a poor old woman talk so sweetly of Jesus Christ, that I knew not how the time past away." "I will be hanged, said Mrs. Hill, if our Tutor does not turn Methodist by and by!" "Methodist, Madam, said he, pray what is that?" She replied, "Why, the Methodists are a people that do nothing but pray. They are praying all day and all night." "Are they, said he? Then with the help of God, I will find them out, if they be above ground." He did not long after find them out and had his desire, being admitted into the Society.

While

While he was in town he met in Mr. Edward's Class, and lost no opportunity of meeting. And he retained a peculiar regard for Mr. Edwards to the day of his death.

3. It was not long, before he was prest in spirit, to call sinners to repentance. Seeing the world all around him lying in wickedness, he found an earnest desire,

“ To pluck poor brands out of the fire,
To snatch them from the verge of hell.”

And though he was yet far from being perfect in the English tongue, particularly with regard to the pronunciation of it, yet the earnestness with which he spake, seldom to be seen in England, and the unspeakably tender affection which breathed in every word and gesture to poor, lost sinners, made so deep an impression on all that heard, that very few went empty away.

4. About the year 1753, (being now of a sufficient age) he was ordained Deacon and Priest, and soon after presented to the little Living of Madeley, in Shropshire. This, he had frequently said, was the only Living which he ever desired to have. He was ordained at Whitehall, and the same day, being informed that I had no one to assist me at West-Street Chappel, he came away as soon as ever the Ordination was over, and assisted me in the administration of the Lord's Supper. And he was now doubly diligent in preaching, not only in the Chappels of West-Street and Spitalfields, but wherever the Providence of God opened a door to proclaim the everlasting Gospel. This he did frequently in French (as well as in English) of which all Judges allowed him to be a compleat Master.

5. Hence he removed into the Vicarage House at Madeley. Here he was fully employed among
his

his parishioners, both in town and in Madeley Wood, a mile or two from it, a place much resembling Kingswood, almost wholly inhabited by poor Colliers, and their numerous families. These forlorn ones, (little wiser than the beasts that perish) he took great pains to reform and instruct. And they are now as judicious and as well-behaved a people, as most of their station in the three kingdoms.

6. But after some time he was prevailed upon by the Countess of Huntingdon, to leave his beloved retreat, and remove into Wales, in order to superintend her School at Trevecka. This he did, with all his power, instructing the young men both in learning and philosophy: till he received a letter from the Countess, together with the circular letter, signed by Mr. Shirley, summoning all that feared God in England to meet together at Bristol, at the time of the Methodist Conference, "in order to bear testimony against the *dreadful heresy* contained in the Minutes of the preceding Conference." Her Ladyship declared, that all who did not absolutely renounce those Eight Propositions which were contained in the Minutes of the Conference, must immediately leave her house. Mr. Fletcher was exceedingly surprised at this peremptory declaration. He spent the next day in fasting and prayer, and in the evening wrote to her Ladyship, that he not only could not utterly renounce, but must entirely approve of all those Eight Propositions, and therefore had obeyed her order, by leaving her house, and returning to his own at Madeley.

7. That circular letter was the happy occasion of his writing those excellent *Checks to Antinomianism*, in which one knows not which to admire most, the purity of the language, (such as a foreigner scarce ever wrote before) the strength and clearness of the argument, or the mildness, and sweetness of the spirit, which breathes throughout the whole.

Infomuch

Infomuch that I nothing wonder at a Clergyman that was resolved never to part with his dear Decrees, who being prest to read them, replied, "No, I will never read Mr. Fletcher's Writings; for if I did, I should be of his mind." He now likewise wrote several other valuable Tracts. Mean time he was more abundant in his ministerial labours, both in public and private, visiting his whole parish, early and late in all weathers, regarding neither heat nor cold, rain nor snow, whether he was on horseback or on foot. But this insensibly weakened his constitution, and fapped the foundation of his health; which was still more effectually done, by his intense and uninterrupted studies: at which he frequently continued with scarce any intermission, fourteen, fifteen, or sixteen hours a day. Mean time he did not allow himself necessary food: he seldom took any regular meals, unless he had company; but twice or thrice in four and twenty hours, ate some bread and cheese, or fruit: instead of which he took a draught of milk, and then wrote again.

8. Being informed that his health was greatly impaired, I judged nothing was so likely to restore it as a long journey. So I proposed his taking a journey with me into Scotland, to which he willingly consented. We set out in spring, and after travelling eleven or twelve hundred miles, returned to London in autumn. I verily believe, had he travelled with me a few months longer, he would have quite recovered his health. But being stopped by his friends, he quickly relapsed, and fell into a true pulmonary Consumption.

9. But this sickness was not unto death. It was only sent that the glory of the Lord might appear. During the whole course of it he remained at Newington, and was visited by persons of all ranks. And they all marvelled at the grace of God that was in him. In all his pain no complaint came out

out of his mouth : but his every breath was spent, either in praising God, or exhorting and comforting his neighbour.

10. When nothing else availed, he was advised to take a journey by sea and by land into his own country. He did this, in company with Mr. Ireland, a well tried and faithful friend, who loved him as a brother, and thought no pains ill bestowed, if he could preserve so valuable a life. He resided in his own country about a year, and was a blessing to all that were round about him. Being much recovered, he spent some months in France, and then returned in perfect health to Madeley.

11. In the year 1781, with the full approbation of all his friends, he married Miss Bosanquet : of whom, as she is still alive, I say no more at present, than that she was the only person in England, whom I judged to be worthy of Mr. Fletcher. By her tender and judicious care, his health was confirmed more and more. And I am firmly convinced that had he used this health, in travelling all over the kingdom, five, or six, or seven months every year (for which never was man more eminently qualified; no, not Mr. Whitefield himself) he would have done more good, than any other man in England. I cannot doubt but this would have been the more excellent way. However, though he did not accept of this honour, he did abundance of good in that narrower sphere of action which he chose : and was a pattern well worthy the imitation of all the Parochial Ministers in the kingdom.

12. His manner of life during the time that he and his wife lived together, it may be most satisfactory to give in her own words.

"It is no little grief to me, that my dearly beloved husband has left no account of himself in writing. And I am not able to give many particulars of a life the most angelical I have ever known.

"He was born at Nyon, in the Canton of Berne in Switzerland. In his infancy he discovered a lively genius, and great tenderness of heart. One day, having offended his father, who threatened to correct him, he kept himself at a distance in the garden, till seeing his father approach, and fearing his anger would be renewed by the sight of him, he ran away. But he was presently struck with a deep remorse, thinking, "What! Do I run away from my father? What a wicked wretch? It may be I may live to grow up and have a son that will run away from *me*!" And it was some years before the impression of sorrow, then made upon him wore off.

"When he was about seven years old, he was reproved by his nurse-maid saying, "You are a naughty boy, and the devil takes all such." After he was in bed, he began to reflect on her words, his heart smote him, and he said, "I am a naughty boy, and perhaps God will let the devil fetch me away." He got up on the bed, and for a considerable time, wrestled with God in prayer, till he felt such a sense of the love of God, as made him quite easy.

(Part of the next paragraph I omit, being nearly the same with what I inserted before.)

"When he entered Mr. Hill's family, he did not know Christ in his heart. One Sunday evening, as he was writing some music, the servant came in to make up the fire, and looking at him said, "Sir, I am very sorry to see you so employed on the Lord's day." He immediately put away his music, and from that hour became a strict observer of that holy day.

"Not long after he met with a person, who asked him, to go with her and hear the Methodists. He readily consented. The more he heard, the more uneasy he grew: and doubling his diligence, he hoped by *doing much* to render himself acceptable to God: till one day hearing Mr. Green, he

was

was convinced he did not know what true faith was. This occasioned many reflections in his mind. "Is it possible (said he) that I who have made divinity my study, and have received *the premium of piety* (so called from the University) for my writings on divine subjects; that I should still be so ignorant, as not to know what Faith is! " But the more he examined, the more he was convinced: then sin revived, and hope died away. He now sought by the most rigorous austerities to conquer an evil nature, and bring heaven-born peace into his soul. But the more he struggled, the more he was convinced, that all his fallen soul was sin, and that nothing but a revelation of the love of Jesus could make him a Christian. For this he groaned with unwearied assiduity: till one day after much wrestling with God, lying prostrate on his face before the throne, he felt the application of the blood of Jesus. Now his bonds were broken, and his free soul began to breathe a pure air. Sin was beneath his feet, and he could triumph in the Lord, the God of his salvation.

" From this time he walked valiantly in the ways of God; and thinking he had not leisure enough in the day, he made it a constant rule, to sit up two nights in a week, for reading, prayer and meditation, in order to sink deeper into that communion with God, which was become his soul's delight. Mean time he took only vegetable food, and for above six months, lived wholly on bread, with milk and water.

" Notwithstanding the nights he sat up, he made it a rule, never to sleep, as long as he could possibly keep awake. For this purpose, he always took a candle and book to bed with him. But one night being overcome of sleep, before he had put out the candle, he dreamed his curtains, pillow, and cap were on fire, without doing him any harm. And so it was. In the morning, part of his curtains, pillow and cap, were burnt. But not an

hair of his head was singed. So did God give his angels charge over him!

“Sometime after he was favoured with a particular manifestation of the love of God: so powerful, that it appeared to him, as if body and soul would be separated. Now all his desires centered in one, that of devoting himself to the service of his precious Master. This he thought he could do best, by entering into Orders. God made his way plain, and he soon after settled in Madeley. He received this parish as from the immediate hand of God, and unweariedly laboured therein, and in the adjacent places, till he had spent himself in his Master's service, and was ripening fast for glory. Much opposition he met with for many years, and often his life was in danger. Sometimes he was inwardly constrained to warn obstinate sinners, that if they did not repent the hand of God would cut them off. And the event proved the truth of the prediction. But notwithstanding all their opposition, many were the seals of his ministry.

“He had an earnest desire that the pure gospel should remain among his people, after he was taken away. For this purpose he surmounted great difficulties in building the house in Madeley Wood. He not only saved for it the last farthing he had, but when he was abroad proposed to let the Vicarage-House, (designing at his return to live in a little cottage near it) and appropriate the rent of it for clearing that house.

“Since the time I had the honour and happiness of living with him, every day made me more sensible of the mighty work of the Spirit upon him. The fruits of this were manifest in all his life and conversation, but in nothing more than in his meekness and humility. It was a meekness which no affront could move: an humility which loved to be unknown, forgotten and despised.* How hard is it to find an eminent person who loves an

* I think this was going to an extreme.

Equal? But his delight was, in preferring others to himself. It appeared so natural in him, that it seemed as his meat, to set every one before himself. He spake not of the fault of an absent person, but when necessary; and then with the utmost caution. He made no account of his own labours, and perhaps carried to an extreme, his dislike of hearing them mentioned.

“Patience is the daughter of Humility. In him it discovered itself in a manner which I wish I could either describe or imitate. It produced in him a ready mind to embrace every Cross with alacrity and pleasure. And for the good of his neighbour, (the poor in particular) nothing seemed hard, nothing wearisome. When I have been grieved to call him out of his study, from his closet-work two or three times in an hour, he would answer, “O my Dear, never think of that: it matters not what we do, so we are always ready to meet the will of God: ’tis only conformity to this, which makes any employment excellent.”

“He had a singular love for the Lambs of the flock, the Children, and applied himself with the greatest diligence to their instruction, for which he had a peculiar gift: and this populous parish found him full exercise for it. The poorest met with the same attention from him as the rich. For their sakes he almost grudged himself necessities, and often expressed a pain in using them, while any of his parish wanted them.

“But while I mention his meekness and love, let me not forget the peculiar favour of his Master, in giving him the most firm and resolute *courage*. In reproving sin and daring sinners, he was a *Son of Thunder*, and regarded neither fear nor favour, when he had a message from God to deliver.

“With respect to his communion with God, ’tis much to be lamented that we have no account of it from his own pen. But thus far I can say, it was his constant care, to keep an uninterrupted

sense of the Divine presence. In order to this he was slow of speech, and had the exactest government of his words. To this he was so inwardly attentive, as sometimes to appear stupid to those who knew him not: though few conversed in a more lively manner, when he judged it would be for the glory of God. It was his continued endeavour to draw up his own and every other spirit, to an immediate intercourse with God. And all his intercourse with me, was so mingled with prayer and praise, that every employment and every meal, was as it were, perfumed therewith. He often said, " 'Tis a very little thing, so to hang upon God by faith, as to feel no departure from him. But I want to be filled with the fullness of his spirit. I feel, said he, sometimes such gleams of light, as it were wafts of heavenly air, as seem ready to take my soul with them to glory. A little before his last illness, when the fever began to rage among us, he preached a sermon on the duty of visiting the sick, wherein he said, "What do you fear? Are you afraid of catching the distemper and dying! O fear it no more! What an honour to die in your Master's work! If permitted to me, I should account it a singular favour." In his former illness he wrote thus, "I calmly wait in unshaken resignation, for the full salvation of God; ready to venture on his faithful love, and on the sure mercies of David. His time is best, and is my time: Death has lost its sting. And I bless God, I know not what hurry of spirits is, or unbelieving fears."

"For some months past, he scarce ever lay down or rose up without these words in his mouth,

I nothing have, I nothing am,
My treasure's in the bleeding Lamb
Both now and evermore.

"In one of the letters which he wrote some time since to his dear people of Madeley, some of his words are, "I leave this blessed Island for awhile;
but

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but I trust I shall never leave the kingdom of God, —the shadow of Christ's Cross, the clefts of the Rock, smitten and pierced for us. There I meet you in spirit: thence I trust I shall joyfully leap into the ocean of eternity, to go and join those ministering spirits, who wait on the heirs of salvation. And if I am no more allowed to minister to you on earth, I rejoice at the thought that I shall perhaps be allowed to accompany the angels, who (if you abide in the faith) will be commissioned to carry you into Abraham's bosom."

"The thought enlivens my faith! Lord give me to walk in his steps! Then shall I see him again, and my heart shall rejoice, and we shall eternally behold the Lamb together. Faith brings near the welcome moment! And now He beckons me away! And Jesus bids me come!"

I know not that any thing can or need be added to this, but Mrs. Fletcher's Account of his Death: which follows also in her own words.

"For some time before his late illness, he was particularly penetrated with the nearness of eternity. There was scarce an hour in which he was not calling upon us, to drop every thought and every care, that we might attend to nothing, but drinking deeper into God. We spent much time in wrestling with God, and were led in a peculiar manner, to abandon our whole selves into the hands of God, to do or suffer whatever was pleasing to him.

"On Thursday, Aug. 4, he was employed in the work of God, from three in the afternoon till nine at night. When he came home he said, "I have taken cold." On Friday and Saturday he was not well, but seemed uncommonly drawn out in prayer. On Saturday night his fever appeared very strong. I begged him not to go to church in the morning: but he told me, "It was the will of the Lord;" in which case I never dared to persuade. In reading prayers he almost fainted away. I got through

through the croud, and intreated him to come out of the desk. But he let me and others know, in his sweet manner, that we were not to interrupt the order of God. I then retired to my pew, where all around me were in tears. When he was a little refreshed by the windows being opened he went on; and then preached with a strength and recollection that surprised us all.

“After sermon he went to the Communion Table with these words “I am going to throw myself under the wings of the Cherubim, before the Mercy-seat.” The service held till near two. Sometimes he could scarce stand, and was often obliged to stop. The people were deeply affected: weeping was on every side. Gracious Lord! How was it my soul was kept so calm in the midst of the most tender feelings? Notwithstanding his extreme weakness, he gave out several verses of hymns, and lively sentences of exhortation. When service was over, we hurried him to bed, where he immediately fainted away. He afterward dropt into a sleep for some time and on waking cried out with a pleasant smile, “Now, my Dear, thou seest I am no worse for doing the Lord’s work: he never fails me when I trust in him.” Having got a little dinner, he dozed most of the evening, now and then waking full of the praises of God. At night his fever returned, though not violent; but his strength decreased amazingly. On Monday and Tuesday we had a little paradise together: he lay on a couch in the study, and though often changing posture, was sweetly pleasant, and frequently slept a good while. When awake, he delighted in hearing me read hymns and tracts on Faith and Love. His words were all animating, and his patience beyond expression. When he had any nauseous medicines to take, he seemed to enjoy the cross, according to a word he used often to repeat, That we are to seek a perfect conformity to the will of God, and leave him to give us what
comfort

comfort he saw good. I asked him, whether he had any advice to leave me, if he should be taken from me? He replied, "I have nothing particular to say, the Lord will open all before thee." I said, "Have you any conviction, that God is about to take you?" He said, "No, not in particular; only I always see Death so inexpressibly near, that we both seem to stand on the very verge of eternity." While he slept a little, I besought the Lord, if it was his good pleasure, to spare him to me a little longer. But my prayer seemed to have no wings, and I could not help mingling continually therewith "Lord, give me perfect resignation." This uncertainty made me tremble, lest God was going to put into my hand, the bitter cup with which he lately threatened my husband. Some weeks before, I myself was ill of the fever. My husband then felt the whole parting scene, and struggled for perfect resignation. He said, "O Polly, shall I ever see the day when thou must be carried out to bury? How will the little things which thy tender care has prepared for me in every part of the house, how will they wound and distress me? How is it? I think, I feel jealousy! I am jealous of the worms. I seem to shrink at giving my dear Polly to the worms!"

"Now all these reflections returned upon my heart, with the weight of a millstone. I cried to the Lord, and those words were deeply impressed on my spirits, "Where I am, there shall my servants be, that they may behold my glory." This promise was full of comfort to my soul. I saw that in Christ's immediate presence was our home, and that we should find our re-union in being deeply centered in Him. I received it as a fresh marriage for eternity. As such, I trust for ever to hold it. All that day, whenever I thought of that expression, *to behold my glory*, it seemed to wipe away every tear, and was as the ring whereby we were joined anew.

"Awaking

"Awaking some time after he said, "Polly, I have been thinking, it was Israel's fault, that they asked for *signs*. We will not do so, but abandoning our whole selves into the hands of God, will lie patiently before him, assured that he will do all things well."

"My dear Love, said I, if ever I have done or said any thing to grieve thee, how will the remembrance wound my heart, shouldst thou be taken from me!"

"He intreated and charged me, with inexpressible tendernefs, not to allow the thought; declaring his thankfulness for our union, in a variety of words written on my heart as with the adamantine pen of friendship deeply dipt in blood."

"On Wednesday, after groaning all day under the weight of the power of God, he told me he had received such a manifestation of the full meaning of those words, *God is Love*, as he could never be able to tell. "It fills me, said he, every moment. O Polly, my dear Polly, God is Love." Shout, shout aloud! I want a gust of praise to go to the ends of the earth. But it seems as if I could not speak much longer. Let us fix on a sign between ourselves: (tapping me twice with his fingers,) now I mean, "God is Love." And we will draw each other into God. Observe! By this we will draw each other into God."

"Sally coming in, he cried out, "O Sally, God is love. Shout both of you: I want to hear you shout his praise." All this time the medical friend who diligently attended him, hoped he was in no danger; as he had no bad head-ach, much sleep, without the least delirium, and an almost regular pulse. So was the disease though commissioned to take his life, restrained by the power of God.

"On Thursday his speech began to fail. While he was able, he spoke to all that came in his way. Hearing a stranger was in the house, he ordered her

her to be called up, though uttering two sentences almost made him faint. To his friendly Doctor he would not be silent, while he had any power of speech: after saying, "O Sir, you take much thought for my body: give me leave to take thought for your soul." When I could scarce understand any thing he said, I spoke these words, *God is love*. Instantly, as if all his powers were awakened, he broke out in a rapture, "God is Love! Love! O for that gust of praise I want to sound!" Here his voice again failed. He suffered many ways; but with such patience, as none but those then present can conceive. If I named his sufferings he would smile and make the sign.

"On Friday, finding his body covered with spots, I felt a sword pierce through my soul. As I was kneeling by his side with my hand in his, entreating the Lord to be with us in this tremendous hour, he strove to say many things, but could not: pressing my hand, and often repeating the sign. At last he breathed out, "Head of the Church, be Head to my wife!" When for a few moments I was forced to leave him, Sally said to him, "My dear Master, do you know me?" He replied, "Sally, God will put his right hand under you." She added, O my dear Master, should you be taken away, what a disconsolate creature will my poor dear Mistress be?" He replied, "God will be her all in all." He had always delighted much in these words,

"Jesu's blood through earth and skies,
Mercy, free, boundless mercy cries."

Whenever I repeated them to him, he would answer, *Boundless! boundless! boundless!* He now added, though with great difficulty,

"Mercy's full power I soon shall prove,
Lov'd with an everlasting love."

"On

"On Saturday afternoon his fever seemed quite off, and a few friends standing near the bed, he reached his hand to each, and looking on a Minister, said, "Are you ready to assist to-morrow?" His recollection surprised us, as the day of the week had not been named in his room. Many believed he would recover; and one said, "Do you think the Lord will raise you up?" He strove to answer, saying, "Raise me in the resurr" — meaning in the resurrection. To another, asking the same question, he said, "I leave it all to God."

"In the evening, the fever returned with violence, and the mucus falling on his throat almost strangled him. It was supposed the same painful emotion, would grow more and more violent to the last. As I felt this exquisitely, I cried to the Lord to remove it; and glory be to his name, he did. From that time it returned no more. As night drew on, I perceived him dying very fast. His fingers could hardly make the sign, (which he scarce ever forgot) and his speech seemed quite gone. I said, "My dear creature, I ask not for myself, *I know thy soul*; but for the sake of others. If Jesus is very present with thee, lift thy right hand." He did. "If the prospect of glory sweetly opens before thee repeat the sign." He immediately raised it again: and in half a minute, a second time: he then threw it up, as if he would reach the top of the bed. After this, his dear hands moved no more: but on my saying, "Art thou in much pain? Answered, No." From this time he lay in kind of sleep, though with his eyes open and fixt. For the most part he sat upright against pillows, with his head a little inclining to one side. And so remarkably composed and triumphant was his countenance, that the least trace of death was scarce discernible in it.

"Twenty-four hours he was in this situation, breathing like a person in common sleep. About thirty-five minutes past ten on Sunday night, August

14th.

14th, his precious soul entered into the joy of his Lord, without one struggle or groan, in the fifty-sixth year of his age.

"And here I break off my mournful story: but on my bleeding heart, the fair picture of his heavenly excellence will be for ever drawn. When I call to mind his ardent zeal, his laborious endeavours to seek and save the lost, his diligence in the employment of his time, his Christ-like condescension toward me, and his uninterrupted converse with heaven; I may well be allowed to add, my loss is beyond the power of words to paint. I have gone *through deep waters*; but all my afflictions were nothing compared to this. Well: I want no pleasant prospect, but upwards; nor any thing whereon to fix my hope, but immortality.

"On the 17th, his dear remains were deposited in Madeley Church-yard, amid the tears and lamentations of thousands. The service was performed by the Rev. Mr. Hatton, Rector of Waters-Upton, whom God enabled to speak in a pathetic manner to his weeping flock. In the conclusion, at my request, he read the following paper.

"As it was the desire of my beloved husband to be buried in this plain manner, so out of tenderness he begged, that I might not be present. And in all things I would obey him.

"Permit me then by the mouth of a friend, to bear my open testimony, to the glory of God, that I who have known him in the most perfect manner, am constrained to declare, that I never knew any one walk so closely in the ways of God as he did. The Lord gave him a conscience tender as the apple of an eye. He literally preferred the interest of every one to his own.

"He was rigidly just, but perfectly loose from all attachment to the world. He shared *his all* with the poor, who lay so close to his heart, that at the approach of death, when he could not speak without difficulty, he cried out, "O my poor! What will become of my poor?" He was blest with so

great a degree of humility, as is scarce to be found. I am witness, how often he has rejoiced, in being treated with contempt. Indeed it seemed the very food of his soul, to be little and unknown. When he desired me to write a line to his Brother, if he died, I replying, "I will write him all the Lord's dealings with thee:" "No, no, said he: write nothing about me. I only desire to be forgotten. *God is all!*"

"His zeal for souls I need not tell you. Let the labours of twenty-five years, and a Martyr's death in the conclusion, imprint it on your hearts. His diligent visitation of the sick occasioned the fever, which by God's commission, tore him from you and me. And his vehement desire to take his last leave of you, with dying lips and hands, gave, it is supposed, the finishing stroke, by preparing his blood for putrefaction. Thus has he lived and died your Servant. And will any of you refuse to meet him at God's right hand in that day?

"He walked with death always in sight. About two months ago he came to me and said, "My dear Love, I know not how it is, but I have a strange impression, Death is very near us, as if it would be some sudden stroke upon one of us. And it draws out all my soul in prayer, that we may be ready. He then broke out, "Lord prepare the soul thou wilt call. And O stand by the poor disconsolate one that shall be left behind!"

"A few days before his departure, he was filled with love in an uncommon manner, saying to me, "I have had such a discovery of the depth of that word, *God is Love*, I cannot tell thee half. O shout his praise." The same he testified, as long as he had a voice, and continued to testify to the end, by a most lamb-like patience, in which he smiled over death, and set his last seal to the glorious truths he had so long preached among you."

"Three years, nine months and two days, I have possessed my heavenly-minded husband. But now the sun of my earthly joy is set for ever, and
my

my soul filled with an anguish, which only finds its consolation in a total resignation to the will of God. When I was asking the Lord, if he pleased to spare him to me a little longer, the following promise was imprest on my mind with great power (in the accomplishment of which *I look for our reunion*) "Where I am, there shall my servants be, that they may behold my glory." Lord, hasten the hour."

There is little need of adding any farther character of this man of God, to the foregoing account, given by one who wrote out of the fulness of her heart. I would only observe, that for many years I despaired of finding any inhabitant of Great-Britain, that could stand in any degree of comparison, with Gregory Lopez, or Monsieur de Renty. But let an impartial person judge, if Mr. Fletcher was at all inferior to them? Did he not experience as deep communion with God, and as high a measure of inward Holiness, as was experienced either by one or the other of those burning and shining lights? And it is certain his outward Holiness shone before men, with full as bright a lustre as theirs. But if any should attempt to draw a parallel between them, there are two circumstances that deserve consideration: One is, we are not assured, that the Writers of *their* lives, did not extenuate, if not suppress what was amiss in them. And some things amiss we are assured there were, namely, many touches of Superstition, and some of Idolatry, in worshipping Saints, the Virgin Mary in particular. But I have not suppressed or extenuated any thing in Mr. Fletcher's Character. For indeed I knew nothing that was amiss, nothing that needed to be extenuated, much less suppressed. A second circumstance is, that the Writers of *their* lives, could not have so full a knowledge of them, as both Mrs. Fletcher and I had of Mr. Fletcher's, being eye and ear-witnesses of his whole conduct. Consequently we know, that his Life was not

fulled with any mixture of either Idolatry or Superstition. I was intimately acquainted with him for above thirty years. I conversed with him morning, noon, and night, without the least reserve, during a journey of many hundred miles. And in all that time, I never heard him speak one improper word, nor saw him do an improper action.—To conclude. Many exemplary men have I known, holy in heart and life, within fourscore years. But one equal to him, I have not known: one so inwardly and outwardly devoted to God. So unblamable a character in every respect I have not found either in Europe or America. Nor do I expect to find another such, on this side of Eternity.

As it is possible we all may be such as he was, let us endeavour to follow him as he followed Christ!

Norwich, Oct. 24, 1785.

HIS E P I T A P H.

Here lies the Body of
The Rev. JOHN WILLIAM de la FLECHERE,
Vicar of Madeley.

Who was born at Nyon, in Switzerland,

September the twelfth, 1729,

And finished his course August the 14th, 1785.

In this Village,

Where his unexampled Labours

Will never be forgotten.

He exercised his Ministry for the space of 25 Years

In this Parish,

With uncommon Zeal and Ability.

But though many believed his report,

Yet he might with justice have adopted

The Lamentation of the Prophet,

All the Day long have I stretched out my Hands

Unto a disobedient and gain-saying People:

Yet surely my Judgment is with the Lord,

And my Work with my God.

SERMON

S E R M O N XLIV.

Preached before the SOCIETY for REFORMATION
of MANNERS, on Sunday, January 30, 1762, at
the Chapel in West-Street, Seven-Dials.

PSALM XCIV. 16.

“ Who will rise up with me against the wicked ? ”

1. **I**N all ages, men who neither feared God, nor regarded man, have combined together and formed confederacies, to carry on the works of darkness. And herein they have shewn themselves wise in their generation ; for by this means they more effectually promoted the kingdom of their father, the devil, than otherwise they could have done. On the other hand, men who did fear God and desire the happiness of their fellow-creatures, have in every age found it needful to join together, in order to oppose the works of darkness, to spread the knowledge of God their Saviour, and to promote his kingdom upon earth. Indeed He himself has instructed them so to do. From the time that men were upon the earth, he hath taught them to join together in his service, and has united them in one body by one spirit. And for this very end He has joined them together, “ that He might destroy the works of the devil,” first in them that are already united, and by Them in all that are round about them.

2. This is the original design of the church of Christ. It is a body of men compacted together, in order first, to save each his own soul, then to assist each other in working out their salvation, and afterwards as far as in them lies, to save all men

from present and future misery, to overcome the kingdom of Satan, and set up the kingdom of Christ. And this ought to be the continued care and endeavour of every member of the church. Otherwise he is not worthy to be called a member thereof, as he is not a living member of Christ.

3. Accordingly this ought to be the constant care and endeavour of all those, who are united together in these kingdoms, and are commonly called *The Church of England*. They are united together for this very end, to oppose the devil and all his works, and to wage war against the world and the flesh, his constant and faithful allies. But do they in fact answer the end of their union? Are all who stile themselves "Members of the church of England," heartily engaged in opposing the works of the devil, and fighting against the world and the flesh? Alas, we cannot say this. So far from it, that a great part, I fear, the greater part of them, are themselves *the World*, the people that know not God, to any saving purpose: are indulging, day by day, instead of "mortifying the flesh, with its affections and desires;" and doing themselves those works of the devil, which they are peculiarly engaged to destroy.

4. There is therefore still need, even in this *Christian Country* (as we *courteously* stile Great Britain) yea, in this *Christian Church* (if we may give that title to the bulk of our nation) of some to *rise up against the wicked*, and join together *against the evil doers*. Nay, there was never more need than there is at this day, for *them that fear the Lord*, to *speak often together*, on this very head, How they may *lift up a standard against the iniquity* which overflows the land. There is abundant cause for all the servants of God, to join together against the works of the devil, with united hearts and counsels and endeavours, to make a stand for God, and to repress, as much as in them lies, these *goods of ungodliness*.

5. For

5. For this end a few persons in London, towards the close of the last century, united together, and after a while were termed, "The Society for Reformation of Manners." And incredible good was done by them, for near forty years. But then most of the original members, being gone to their reward, those who succeeded them grew faint in their mind, and departed from the work. So that a few years ago the Society ceased, nor did any of the kind remain in the kingdom.

6. It is a Society of the same nature, which has been lately formed. I purpose to shew, First, The *Nature* of their Design, and the *Steps* they have hitherto taken; 2. The *Excellency* of it, with the various *Objections* which have been raised against it; 3. *What manner of men* they ought to be, who engage in such a design: and 4. With what *Spirit* and in what *Manner* they should proceed, in the prosecution of it. I shall conclude with an *Application* both to them, and to all that fear God.

I. 1. I am, first, to shew the *Nature* of their Design and the *Steps* they have hitherto taken.

It was on a Lord's Day in August 1757, that in a small company, who were met for prayer and religious conversation, mention was made of the gross and open profanation of that sacred day, by persons buying and selling, keeping open shop, tippling in alehouses, and standing or sitting in the streets, roads or fields, vending their wares as on common days: especially in Moor-fields, which was then full of them every Sunday, from one end to the other. It was considered, What Method could be taken, to redress these grievances? And it was agreed, That six of them should in the morning wait upon Sir John Fielding for instruction. They did so. He approved of the design, and directed them how to carry it into execution.

2. They first delivered Petitions to the right honourable the Lord Mayor and the Court of Aldermen,

men, to the Justices sitting at Hick's-Hall, and those in Westminster-hall. And they received from all these honourable Benches much encouragement to proceed.

3. It was next judged proper, to signify their design to many persons of eminent rank, and to the body of the Clergy, as well as the Ministers of other denominations, belonging to the several churches and meetings, in and about the cities of London and Westminster. And they had the satisfaction to meet with an hearty consent and universal approbation from them.

4. They then printed and dispersed, at their own expence, several thousand books of instruction, to Constables and other Parish-Officers, explaining and enforcing their several duties. And to prevent, as far as possible, the necessity of proceeding to an actual execution of the laws, likewise printed and dispersed in all parts of the town, dissuatives from Sabbath breaking, extracts from acts of parliament against it, and notices to the offenders.

5. The way being paved by these precautions, it was in the beginning of the year 1758, that after notices delivered again and again, which were as often set at nought, actual informations were made to Magistrates, against persons profaning the Lord's Day. By this means they first cleared the streets and fields of those notorious offenders; who without any regard either to God or the King, were selling their wares from morning to night. They proceeded to a more difficult attempt, the preventing Tippling on the Lord's Day, spending the time in alehouses which ought to be spent in the more immediate worship of God. Herein they were exposed to abundance of reproach, to insult and abuse of every kind; having not only the tipplers and those who entertained them, the alehousekeepers, to contend with, but rich and honourable men, partly the landlords of those alehouse-keepers, partly those who furnished them with drink, and in general.

general all who gained by their sins. Some of these were not only men of substance, but men in authority; nay, in more instances than one, they were the very persons before whom the Delinquents were brought. And the treatment they gave those who laid the Informations, naturally encouraged *the beasts of the people*, to follow their example, and to use them as fellows not fit to live upon the earth. Hence they made no scruple, not only to treat them with the basest language, not only to throw at them mud and stones or whatever came to hand, but many times to beat them without mercy, and to drag them over the stones, or through the kennels. And that they did not murder them, was not for want of will; but the bridle was in their teeth.

6. Having therefore received help from God, they went on to restrain Bakers likewise, from spending so great a part of the Lord's Day, in exercising the works of their calling.* But many of these were more noble than the Victuallers. They were so far from resenting this, or looking upon it as an affront, that several who had been hurried down the stream of custom, to act contrary to their own Conscience, sincerely thanked them for their labour, and acknowledged it as a real kindness.

7. In clearing the streets, fields and alehouses of sabbath-breakers, they fell upon another sort of offenders as mischievous to society as any, namely, Gamesters of various kinds. Some of these were of the lowest and vilest class, commonly called Gamblers, who made a trade of seizing on young and unexperienced men, and tricking them out of all their money. And after they have beggared them, they frequently teach them the same mystery of iniquity. Several Nests of these they have rooted out, and constrained not a few of them,

* They did not mean by this, The Restaining them from baking provision for the Poor.

honestly to earn their bread by the sweat of their brow, and the labour of their hands.

8. Increasing in number and strength, they extended their views, and began not only to repress Profane Swearing, but to remove out of our streets, another public nuisance and scandal of the Christian name, Common Prostitutes. Many of these were stopped in their mid career of audacious wickedness. And in order to go to the root of the disease, many of the Houses that entertained them, have been detected, prosecuted according to law, and totally suppressed. And some of the poor, desolate women themselves, tho' fallen to

"The lowest line of human infamy," have acknowledged the gracious providence of God, and broke off their sins by lasting repentance. Several of these have been placed out, and several received into the Magdalen Hospital.

9. If a little digression may be allowed, who can sufficiently admire the wisdom of Divine Providence, in the disposal of the times and seasons, so as to suit one occurrence to another? For instance. Just at a time when many of these poor creatures, being stopt in their course of sin, found a desire of leading a better life, as it were in answer to that sad question, "But if I quit the way I now am in, what can I do to live? For I am not mistress of any trade; and I have no friends that will receive me?" I say, just at this time, God has prepared the Magdalen Hospital. Here those who have no trade, nor any friends to receive them, are received with all tenderness. Here they may live, and that with comfort, being provided with all things, that are needful *for life and godliness.*

10. But to return. The number of persons brought to justice, from August 1757, to August 1762, is 9596.

Brought

On the REFORMATION of MANNERS. 191

Brought over, 9596

From thence to the present time.

For unlawful Gaming, and profane Swear-

ing, 540

For Sabbath-breaking, 400

Lewd Women and keepers of ill Houses 550

For offering to sale obscene Prints, 2

In all, 10588

11. In the admission of members into the society, no regard is had to any particular sect or party. Whoever is found upon enquiry to be a good man, is readily admitted. And none who has selfish or pecuniary views, will long continue therein: not only because he can gain nothing thereby, because he would quickly be a loser: inasmuch as he must commence subscriber, as soon as he is a member. Indeed the vulgar cry is "These are all Whiteselites." But it is a great mistake. About twenty of the constantly subscribing members, are all that are in the connexion with Mr. Whitefield. About fifty are in connexion with Mr. Wesley. About twenty, who are of the established Church, have no connexion with either: and about seventy are Dissenters, who make in all an hundred and sixty. There are indeed many more, who assist in the work by occasional subscriptions.

II. 1. These are the *steps* which have been hitherto taken in prosecution of this design. I am in the second place, to shew, the *excellency* thereof, notwithstanding the objections which have been raised against it. Now this may appear from several considerations. And first, from hence. That the making an open stand, against all the ungodliness and unrighteousness, which overspread our land as a flood, is one of the noblest ways of confessing Christ in the face of his enemies. It is giving glory to God, and shewing mankind, that even in these dregs of time,

" There

"There are, who faith prefer,
Tho' few, and piety to God."

And what more excellent, than to render to God, the honour due unto his name? To declare by a stronger proof than words, even by suffering, and running all hazards, "Verily there is a reward for the righteous; doubtless there is a God that judgeth the earth?"

2. How excellent is the design, to prevent in any degree, the dishonour done to his glorious name, the contempt which is poured on his authority, and the scandal brought upon our holy religion, by the gross, flagrant wickedness of those who are still called by the name of Christ? To stem in any degree the torrent of vice, to repress the floods of ungodliness, to remove in any measure those occasions of blaspheming the worthy name whereby we are called, is one of the noblest designs that can possibly enter into the heart of man to conceive.

3. And as this design thus evidently tends to bring *glory to God in the highest*, so it no less manifestly conduces, to the establishing *peace upon earth*. For as all sin directly tends, both to destroy our peace with God, by setting him at open defiance, to banish peace from our own breasts, and to set every man's sword against his neighbour: so whatever prevents or removes sin, does in the same degree promote peace, both peace in our own soul, peace with God, and peace with one another. Such are the genuine fruits of this design, even in the present world. But why should we confine our views to the narrow bounds of time and space? Rather pass over these into eternity. And what fruit of it shall we find there? Let the Apostle speak: "Brethren, if one of you err from the truth, and one convert him" (not to this or that opinion, but to God) "let him know, that he who converteth a sinner from the error of his way, shall

omit to save souls

save a soul from death, and hide a multitude of sins,"
Jam. v. 19, 20.

4. Nor is it to individuals only, whether those who betray others into sin, or those that are liable to be betrayed and destroyed by them, that the benefit of this design redounds, but to the whole community whereof we are members. For is it not a sure observation, *righteousness exalteth a nation?* And is it not as sure on the other hand, that *sin is a reproach* to any people? yea, and bringeth down the curse of God upon them? So far therefore as righteousness in any branch is promoted, so far is the national interest advanced. So far as sin, especially open sin is restrained, the curse and reproach are removed from us. Whoever therefore they are that labour herein, they are general benefactors. They are the truest friends of their king and country. And in the same proportion as their design takes place, there can be no doubt, but God will give national prosperity in accomplishment of his faithful word, "Them that honour me, I will honour."

5. But it is objected, "However excellent a design this is, it does not concern you. For are there not persons, to whom the repressing these offences and punishing the offenders properly belong? Are there not constables and other parish officers, who are bound by oath to this very thing?" There are. Constables and church-wardens in particular, are engaged by solemn oaths, to give due information against profaners of the Lord's day, and all other scandalous sinners. But if they leave it undone, if notwithstanding their oaths, they trouble not themselves about the matter, it concerns all that fear God, that love mankind, and that wish well to their king and country, to pursue this design with the very same vigour, as if there were no such officers existing. It being just the same thing, if they are of no use, as if they had no being.

6. "But this is only a pretence: their real design is to get money by giving information," So it has frequently and roundly been affirmed; but without the least shadow of truth. The contrary may be proved by a thousand instances: no member of the society, takes any part of the money which is by the law allotted to the informer. They never did from the beginning: nor does any of them ever receive any thing, to suppress or withdraw their information. This is another mistake, if not wilful slander, for which there is not the least foundation.

7. "But the design is impracticable. Vice is risen to such a head, that it is impossible to suppress it: especially by such means. For what can a handful of poor people do, in opposition to all the world?" "With men this is impossible, but not with God." And they trust not in themselves but him. Be then the patrons of vice ever so strong, to him they are no more than grasshoppers. And all means are alike to him. It is the same thing with God *to deliver by many or by few*. The small number therefore of those who are on the Lord's side is nothing, neither the great number of those that are against him. Still he doth whatever pleaseth him. And "there is no counsel or strength against the Lord."

8. "But if the end you aim at, be really to reform sinners, you chuse the wrong means. It is the word of God must effect this, and not human laws. And it is the work of ministers not of magistrates. Therefore the applying to these can only produce an outward reformation. It makes no change in the heart."

It is true the word of God is the chief, ordinary means, whereby he changes both the hearts and lives of sinners: and he does this chiefly by the ministers of the gospel. But it is likewise true, that the magistrate is *the minister of God*: and that he is designed of God *to be a terror to evil doers*
by

by executing human laws upon them. If this does not change the heart, yet to prevent outward sin, is one valuable point gained. There is so much the less dishonour done to God, less scandal brought on our holy religion, less curse and reproach upon our nation, less temptation laid in the way of others. Yea, and less wrath heaped up by the sinners themselves against the day of wrath.

9. "Nay, rather more: for it makes many of them hypocrites, pretending to be what they are not. Others, by exposing them to shame, and putting them to expence, are made impudent and desperate in wickedness: so that in reality none of them are any better, if they are not worse than they were before."

This is a mistake all over. For 1. Where are these hypocrites? We know none who have pretended to be what they are not. 2. The exposing obstinate offenders to shame, and putting them to expence, does not make them desperate in offending, but afraid to offend. 3. Some of them, far from being worse, are substantially better, the whole tenor of their lives being changed. Yea 4. Some are inwardly changed, even "from darkness to light, and from the power of satan unto God."

10. "But many are not convinced, that buying or selling on the Lord's day is a sin."

If they are not convinced, they ought to be: it is high time they should. The case is as plain as plain can be. For if an open, wilful breach both of the law of God and the law of the land, is not sin, pray what is? And if such a breach both of divine and human laws is not to be punished, because a man is not convinced it is a sin, there is an end of all execution of justice, and all men may live as they list.

11. "But *mild* methods ought to be tried first." They ought. And so they are. A mild admonition is given to every offender, before the law is put in execution against him: nor is any man

prosecuted, till he has express notice, that this will be the case, unless he will prevent that prosecution, by removing the cause of it. In every case the mildest method is used, which the nature of the case will bear: nor are severer means ever applied, but when they are absolutely necessary to the end.

12. "Well, but after all this stir about reformation, what real good has been done?" Un-speakable good; and abundantly more, than any one could have expected, in so short a time, considering the small number of the instruments, and the difficulties they had to encounter. Much evil has been already prevented, and much has been removed. Many sinners have been outwardly reformed; some have been inwardly changed. The honour of him whose name we bear, so openly affronted, has been openly defended. And it is not easy to determine, how many and how great blessings, even this little stand, made for God and his cause, against his daring enemies, may already have derived upon our whole nation. On the whole then, after all the objections that can be made, reasonable men may still conclude, a more excellent design could scarce ever enter into the heart of man.

III. But *what manner of men* ought they to be, who engage in such a design? Some may imagine, any that are willing to assist therein, ought readily to be admitted; and that the greater the number of the members, the greater will be their influence. But this is by no means true; matter of fact undeniably proves the contrary. While the former society for reformation of manners, consisted of chosen members only, tho' neither many, rich, nor powerful, they broke thro' all opposition, and were eminently successful in every branch of their undertaking. But when a number of men, less carefully chosen, were received into the society, they

they grew less and less useful, till by insensible degrees, they dwindled into nothing.

2. The number therefore of the members is no more to be attended to, than their riches or eminence. This is a work of God. It is undertaken in the name of God, and for his sake. It follows, that men who neither love nor fear God, have no part or lot in this matter, "*Why takest thou my covenant in thy mouth,*" may God say to any of these, *whereas thou thyself hatest to be reformed, and have cast my words behind thee?* Whoever therefore lives in any known sin, is not fit to engage in reforming sinners. More especially if he is guilty in any instance, or in the least degree, of profaning the name of God, or buying, or selling, or doing any unnecessary work on the Lord's day, or offending in any other of those instances, which this society is peculiarly designed to reform. No: let none who stands himself in need of this reformation, presume to meddle with such an undertaking. First, let him, "pull the beam out of his own eye." Let him be himself *unblameable* in all things.

3. Not that this will suffice. Every one engaging herein, should, be more than a harmless man. He should be a man of *faith*: having at least such a degree of that "evidence of things not seen," as to "aim not at the things that are seen, which are temporal, but at those that are not seen, which are eternal:" such a faith, as produces a steady *fear of God*, with a lasting resolution, by his grace, to abstain from all that he has forbidden, and to do all that he has commanded. He will more especially need, that particular branch of faith, *confidence in God*. It is this faith which *removes mountains*, which *quenches the violence of fire*, which breaks thro' all opposition, and enables one to stand against and *chase a thousand*, knowing in whom his strength lies, and even when he has "the sen-

tence of death in himself, trusting in him who raiseth the dead."

4. He that has faith and confidence in God, will of consequence be a man of *courage*. And such it is highly needful every man should be, who engages in this undertaking. For many things will occur in the prosecution thereof, which are terrible to nature; indeed so terrible, that all who *confer with flesh and blood* will be afraid to encounter them. Here therefore true courage has its proper place, and is necessary in the highest degree. And this, faith only can supply. A believer can say,

I fear no denial; No danger I fear:
Nor start from the trial; For Jesus is near.

5. To *courage*, *patience* is nearly allied: the one regarding future, the other present evils. And whoever joins in carrying on a design of this nature, will have great occasion for this. For notwithstanding all his unblameableness, he will find himself just in Ishmael's situation, "his hand against every man, and every man's hand against him." And no wonder. If it be true, that "all who will live godly, shall suffer persecution," how eminently must this be fulfilled in them, who not content to live godly themselves, compel the ungodly to do so too, or at least to refrain from notorious ungodliness? Is not this declaring war against all the world? Setting all the children of the devil at defiance? And will not satan himself, *the prince of this world, the ruler of the darkness* thereof, exert all his subtlety and all his force, in support of his tottering kingdom? Who can expect, the *roaring lion* will tamely submit to have the prey plucked out of his teeth? "Ye have therefore need of patience, that when ye have done the will of God ye may receive the promise."

6. And ye have need of *steadiness*, that ye may "hold fast *this* profession of your faith without wavering."

wavering." This also should be found in all that unite in this society; which is not a task for a *double-minded man*, for one that is *unstable in his ways*. He that is as a reed shaken with the wind, is not fit for this warfare, which demands a firm purpose of soul, a constant, determined resolution. One that is wanting in this, may *set his hand to the plough*: but how soon will he *look back*? He may indeed *endure for a time*. But when *persecution or tribulation*, public or private troubles, *arise because of the work*, immediately he is *offended*.

7. Indeed it is hard for any to persevere in so unpleasing a work, unless *love* overpowers both pain and fear. And therefore it is highly expedient that all engaged therein, have "the love of God shed abroad in their hearts:" that they should all be able to declare, "we love him, because he first loved us." The presence of him whom their soul loveth; will then make their labour light. They can then say, not from the wildness of an heated imagination, but with the utmost truth and soberness,

With thee conversing, I forget
All time, and toil, and care;
Labour is rest, and pain is sweet,
While thou, my God, art here.

8. What adds a still greater sweetness even to labour and pain, is the christian *love of our neighbour*. When they *love their neighbour*, that is, every soul of man, *as themselves*, as their own souls; when *the love of Christ constrains* them to love one another, *even as he loved us*; when, as he *tasted death for every man*, so they are *ready to lay down their lives for their brethren*, (including in that number, every man, every soul for which Christ died :) what prospect of danger will then be able to fright them from their labour of love; What suffering will they not be ready to undergo, to save one soul from everlasting burnings? What continuance of labour.

labour, disappointment, pain, will vanquish their fixt resolution? Will they not be

“ ‘Gainst all repulses steel’d, nor ever tir’d,
With toilsome day, or ill-succeeding night?”

So love both “hopeth and endureth all things.”
So “charity never faileth.”

9. Love is necessary for all the members of such a society, on another account likewise; even because it is *not puffed up*; it produces not only courage and patience, but Humility. And O! how needful is this for all who are so employed! What can be of more importance, than that they should be little, and mean, and base, and vile in their own eyes? For otherwise, should they think themselves any thing, should they impute any thing to themselves, should they admit any thing of a pharisaic spirit, “trusting in themselves that they were righteous, and despising others:” nothing could more directly tend to overthrow the whole design. For then they would not only have all the world, but also God himself to contend with; seeing he *refuseth the proud, and giveth grace only to the humble*. Deeply conscious therefore should every member of this society be, of his own foolishness, weakness, helplessness: continually hanging with his whole soul upon him, who alone hath wisdom and strength, with an unspeakable conviction, that “the help which is done upon earth, God doth it himself;” and that it is he “alone who worketh in us, both to will and to do, of his good pleasure.”

10. One point more. Whoever engages in this design should have deeply impress’d on his heart, namely, that “the wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God.” Let him therefore *learn of him who was meek* as well as lowly. And let him abide in meekness as well as humility: “With all lowliness and meekness, let him walk worthy of the vocation wherewith he is called.” Let him be
“gentle

"gentle toward all men," good or bad, for his own sake, for their sake, for Christ's sake. Are any "ignorant and out of the way?" Let him *have compassion* upon them. Do they even *oppose* the word and the work of God, yea set themselves in battle array against it? So much the more hath he need, "in meekness to instruct those who thus oppose themselves," if haply they may "awake out of the snare of the devil," and no more be "taken captive at his will."

IV. 1. From the *qualifications* of those who are proper to engage in such an undertaking as this, I proceed to shew, Fourthly, With what *spirit*, and in what *manner*, it ought to be pursued. First, with what spirit. Now this first regards the *motive*, which is to be preserved, in every step that is taken. For if at any time "the light which is in thee be darkness, how great is that darkness? But if thine eye be single, thy whole body shall be full of light." This is, therefore, continually to be remembered, and carried into every word and action. Nothing is to be spoke or done, either great or small, with a view to any temporal advantage: nothing with a view to the favour or esteem, the love or the praise of men. But the intention, the eye of the mind, is always to be fixt on the glory of God and good of man.

2. But the spirit with which every thing is to be done, regards the *temper* as well as the motive. And this is no other than that, which has been described above. For the same courage, patience, steadiness, which qualify a man for the work, are to be exercised therein. *Above all*, let him take the *shield of faith*: this will quench a thousand fiery darts. Let him exert all the faith which God has given him, in every trying hour. And let *all his doings be done in love*: never let this be wrested from him. Neither must *many waters* quench this love, nor the floods of ingratitude drown it. *Let*
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likewise that lowly *mind* be in him, which was also in Christ Jesus. Yea, and let him *be clothed with humility*, filling his heart, and adorning his whole behaviour. At the same time, let him "put on bowels of mercies, gentleness, long-suffering;" avoiding the least appearance of malice, bitterness, anger or resentment; knowing, it is our calling, not to be "overcome of evil, but to overcome evil with good." In order to preserve this humble, gentle love, it is needful to do all things with *recollection* of spirit, *watching* against all *hurry*, or dissipation of thought, as well as against pride, wrath, or surliness. But this can be no otherwise preserved than by *continuing instant in prayer*, both before and after he comes into the field, and during the whole action; and by doing all in the *spirit of sacrifice*, offering all to God, thro' the Son of his love.

3. As to the outward *manner* of acting, a general rule is, Let it be expressive of these inward tempers. But to be more particular. 1. Let every man beware, not to *do evil that good may come*. Therefore "putting away all lying, let every man speak the truth to his neighbour." Use no fraud or guile, either in order to detect or to punish any man, but "by simplicity and godly sincerity commend yourself to men's consciences in the sight of God." It is probable, that, by your adhering to these rules, fewer offenders will be convicted. But so much the more will the blessing of God accompany the whole undertaking.

4. But let Innocence be joined with *Prudence*, properly so called. Not that offspring of hell, which *the world calls* Prudence, which is mere Craft, Cunning, Dissimulation: but with that *wisdom from above*, which our Lord peculiarly recommends to all, who would promote his kingdom upon earth. "Be ye therefore wise as serpents, while ye are harmless as doves." This wisdom will instruct you, how to suit your words and whole

whole behaviour, to the persons with whom you have to do, to the time, place, and all other circumstances. It will teach you to cut off occasion of offence, even from those who seek occasion, and to do things of the most offensive nature, in the least offensive manner that is possible.

5. Your *manner of speaking*, particularly to Offenders, should be at all times deeply *serious*, (lest it appear like insulting or triumphing over them) rather inclining to *sad*: shewing that you pity them, for what they do, and sympathize with them in what they suffer. Let your *air* and *tone* of voice, as well as words, be *dispassionate, calm, mild*: yea, where it would not appear like dissimulation, even *kind* and *friendly*. In some cases, where it will probably be received as it is meant, you may *profess* the *good-will* you bear them: But at the same time (that it may not be thought to proceed from fear, or any wrong inclination) professing your *intrepidity* and inflexible *resolution*, to oppose and punish vice to the uttermost.

V. 1. It remains only to make some Application of what has been said, partly to You who are already engaged in this work, partly to all that fear God, and more especially to them that love as well as fear him.

With regard to You, who are already engaged in this work, the first advice I would give you is, Calmly and deeply to consider, the nature of your undertaking. Know what you are about; be thoroughly acquainted with what you have in hand. Consider the objections which are made to the whole of your undertaking. And before you proceed, be satisfied that those objections have no real weight. Then may every man act, as he is fully persuaded in his own mind.

2. I advise you, secondly, be not in haste, to increase your number. And in adding thereto, regard not wealth, rank, or any outward circumstance.

Only

Only regard the qualifications above described. Enquire diligently, whether the person proposed be of an *unblamable* carriage, and whether he be a man of *faith, courage, patience, steadiness*? Whether he be a *lover* of God and man? If so, he will add to your strength as well as number. If not you will lose by him more than you gain. For you will displease God. And be not afraid to purge out from among you, any who do not answer the preceding character. By thus lessening your number, you will increase your strength: you will be "vessels meet for your master's use."

3. I would, thirdly, advise you, narrowly to observe from what *motive*, you at any time act or speak. Beware that your Intention be not stained, with any regard either to profit or praise. Whatever you do, "do it to the Lord," as the servants of Christ. Do not aim at pleasing yourself in any point, but pleasing Him whose you are, and whom you serve. Let your eye be single, from first to last: eye God alone in every word and work.

4. I advise you, in the fourth place, see that you do every thing in a right *temper*: with lowliness and meekness, with patience and gentleness, worthy the gospel of Christ. Take every step trusting in God, and in the most tender, loving spirit you are able. Mean time *watch always*, against all hurry and dissipation of spirit, and *pray always* with all earnestness and perseverance, that your faith fail not. And let nothing interrupt that *spirit of sacrifice*, which you make of all you have and are, of all you suffer and do, that it may be an offering of sweet smelling savour to God thro' Jesus Christ.

5. As to the *manner* of acting and speaking, I advise you to do it with all innocence and simplicity, prudence and seriousness. Add to these, all possible calmness and mildness; nay, all the tenderness which the case will bear. You are not to behave as butchers or hangmen, but as surgeons rather; who

who put the patient to no more pain than is necessary, in order to the cure. For this purpose, each of you likewise has need of "a lady's hand with a lion's heart." So shall many even of them you are constrained to punish, "glorify God in the day of visitation."

6. I exhort all of you who fear God, as ever you hope to find mercy at his hands, as you dread being found (tho' you knew it not) "even to fight against God:" Do not on any account, reason, or pretence whatsoever, either directly or indirectly, oppose or hinder so merciful a design, and one so conducive to his glory. But this is not all: If you are lovers of mankind, if you long to lessen the sins and miseries of your fellow-creatures; can you satisfy yourselves, can you be clear before God, by barely not opposing it? Are not you also bound by the most sacred ties, "as you have opportunity to do good to all men?" And is not here an opportunity of doing good to many, even good of the highest kind? In the name of God then, embrace the opportunity. Assist in doing this Good, if no otherwise, yet by your earnest prayers, for them who are immediately employed therein. Assist them, according to your ability, to defray the expence which necessarily attends it, and which, without the assistance of charitable persons, would be a burden they could not bear. Assist them if you can without inconvenience, by quarterly or yearly subscriptions. At least assist them now: Use the present hour, doing what God puts into your heart. Let it not be said, that you saw your brethren labouring for God, and would not help them with one of your fingers. In this way, however, "come to the help of the Lord, to the help of the Lord, against the mighty!"

7. I have an higher demand upon you who love, as well as fear, God. He whom you fear, whom you love, has qualified you, for promoting his work in a more excellent way. Because you love

God you love your brother also: You love not only your friends, but your enemies; not only the friends, but even the enemies of God. You have "put on, as the elect of God, lowliness, gentleness, long-suffering." You have faith in God, and in Jesus Christ whom he hath sent: faith which overcometh the world. And hereby you conquer both evil shame, and that fear of man which *bringeth a snare*: so that you can "stand with boldness before them that despise you, and make no account of your labours." Qualified then as you are, and armed for fight, will you be like the children of Ephraim, "who being harnessed, and carrying bows, turned back in the day of battle?" Will you leave a few of your brethren to stand alone, against all the hosts of the aliens? O say not, "this is too heavy a cross: I have not strength or courage to bear it." True; not of yourself. But you that believe, "can do all things thro' Christ strengthening you." "If thou canst believe, all things are possible to him that believeth." No cross is too heavy for *him* to bear, knowing they that "suffer with him, shall reign with him." Say not, "Nay, but I cannot bear to be *singular*." Then you cannot enter into the kingdom of heaven. No one enters there but through the *narrow way*. And all that walk in this, are singular. Say not, "But I cannot endure the reproach, the odious name of an *Informer*." And did any man ever save his soul, that was not a *by-word*, and a *proverb of reproach*? Neither canst thou ever save thine, unless thou art willing, that men should "say all manner of evil of thee." Say not, "But if I am active in this work, I shall lose not only my reputation, but my friends, my customers, my business, my livelihood, so that I shall be brought to poverty." Thou shalt not: thou canst not: it is absolutely impossible, unless God himself chuseth it. For his "kingdom ruleth over all, and the very hairs of thy head are all numbered." But if

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the wise, the gracious God chuse it for thee, wilt thou murmur or complain? Wilt thou not rather say, "The cup which my Father hath given me, shall I not drink it?" If you "suffer for Christ, happy are you: the spirit of glory and of Christ shall rest upon you." Say not, "I would suffer all things, but my wife will not consent to it. And certainly a man ought to *leave father and mother, and all, and cleave to his wife.*" True, all—but God; all—but Christ. But he ought not to leave *Him* for his wife. He is not to *leave any duty undone*, for the dearest relative. Our Lord himself hath said in this very sense, "If any man loveth father, or mother, or wife, or children, more than me, he is not worthy of me!" Say not, "Well, I would forsake all for Christ. But one duty must not hinder another. And this would frequently hinder my attending Public Worship." Sometimes it probably would. "Go then and learn what that meaneth, I will have mercy and not sacrifice." And whatever is lost by *shewing* this mercy, God will repay seven-fold into thy bosom. Say not, "But I shall hurt my own soul. I am a young man; and by taking up loose women, I should expose myself to temptation." Yes, if you did this in your own strength, or for your own pleasure. But that is not the case. You trust in God: and you aim at pleasing him only. And if he should call you even into the midst of a burning fiery furnace, "though thou walkest through the fire thou shalt not be burnt, neither shall the flames kindle upon thee." "True; if *he called me* into the furnace. But I do not see that I am called to this. Perhaps thou art not willing to see it. However, if thou wast not called before, I call thee *now*, in the name of Christ: take up thy cross and follow Him. Reason no more with flesh and blood, but now resolve to cast in thy lot, with the most despised, the most infamous of his

followers, the filth and offscouring of the world. I call thee in particular, who didst once strengthen their hands, but since art drawn back. Take courage! Be strong! Fulfil their joy, by returning with heart and hand. Let it appear, thou "departest for a season, that they might receive thee again for ever." O "be not disobedient to the heavenly calling!" And as for all of you, who know whereunto ye are called, count ye all things less, so ye may save one soul, for which Christ died. And therein "take no thought for the morrow," but "cast all your care on Him that careth for you." Commit your souls, bodies, substance, all, to Him, "as unto a merciful and faithful Creator."

The Form of a Donation by Will.

Item. I A. B. do hereby give and bequeath the sum of £ ——— unto the Treasurer, for the time being, of a voluntary society, commonly called, or known by the name of *The Society for the Reformation of Manners*, (which Society doth now usually meet in St. Martin's le Grand, near Newgate-Street, London) the same to be paid within ——— months after my decease, and to be applied to the uses and purposes of the said Society.

SERMON

SERMON XLV.

THE GOOD STEWARD.

LUKE XVI. 2.

“ Give an account of thy stewardship: for thou canst be no longer steward.”

1. **T**HE relation which man bears to God, the creature to his Creator, is exhibited to us in the Oracles of God under various representations. Considered as a sinner, a fallen creature, he is there represented as a *debtor* to his Creator. He is also frequently represented as a *servant*, which indeed is essential to him as a creature: inasmuch that this appellation is given to the Son of God when in his state of humiliation: he “ took upon him the form of a servant, being made in the likeness of men.”

2. But no character more exactly agrees with the present state of man than that of a *steward*. Our blessed Lord frequently represents him as such; and there is a peculiar propriety in the representation. It is only in one particular respect, namely, as he is a sinner, that he is stiled a *debtor*. And when he is stiled a *servant*, the appellation is general and indeterminate. But a *steward* is a servant of a particular kind: such a one as man is in all respects. This appellation is exactly expressive of his situation in the present world; specifying what kind of servant he is to God, and what kind of service his divine Master expects from him.

It may be of use then to consider this point thoroughly, and to make our full improvement of it. In order to this, let us first, inquire, in what respects we are now God's *stewards*. Let us, secondly, observe, that when he requires our souls of us, we *can be no longer stewards*. It will then only remain, as we may in the third place observe, to "give an account of our stewardship."

I. 1. And first, we are to enquire, in what respects we are now God's *stewards*. We are now indebted to him for all we have; but although a debtor is obliged to return what he has received, yet until the time of payment comes, he is at liberty to use it as he pleases. It is not so with a steward; he is not at liberty to use what is lodged in his hands, as *he* pleases, but as his Master pleases. He has no right to dispose of any thing which is in his hand, but according to the will of his Lord. For he is not the proprietor of any of these things, but barely intrusted with them by another: and intrusted on this express condition, that he shall dispose of all as his master orders. Now this is exactly the case of every man, with relation to God. We are not at liberty to use what he has lodged in our hands, as *we* please, but as he pleases, who alone is the possessor of heaven and earth, and the Lord of every creature. We have no right to dispose of any thing we have, but according to his will, seeing we are not proprietors of any of these things: they are all, as our Lord speaks, *ἀλλότρια* *belonging to another person*; nor is any thing properly *our own*, in the land of our pilgrimage. We shall not receive *τὰ ἰδία* *our own things*, till we come to our own country. Eternal things only are our own: with all these temporal things we are barely intrusted by another: the disposer and Lord of all. And he intrusts us with them on this express condition, that we use them only as
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our Master's goods, and according to the particular directions which he has given us in his Word.

2. On this condition he hath intrusted us with our souls, our bodies, our goods, and whatever other talents we have received: but in order to impress this weighty truth on our hearts, it will be needful to come to particulars.

And first, God has intrusted us with our *soul*, an immortal spirit, made in the image of God, together with all the powers and faculties thereof, understanding, imagination, memory, will; and a train of affections, either included in it, or closely dependent upon it; love and hatred, joy and sorrow, respecting present good and evil; desire and aversion, hope and fear, respecting that which is to come. All these St. Paul seems to include in two words, when he says "the peace of God shall keep your hearts and minds." Perhaps indeed the latter word, *νόματα*, might rather be rendered *thoughts*: provided we take that word in its most extensive sense, for every perception of the mind, whether active or passive.

4. Now of all these, it is certain, we are only stewards. God has intrusted us with these powers and faculties, not that we may employ them according to our own will, but according to the express orders which he has given us: (although it is true, that in doing his will, we most effectually secure our own happiness, seeing it is hereby only that we can be happy, either in time, or in eternity.) Thus, we are to use our understanding, our imagination, our memory, wholly to the glory of him that gave them. Thus our will is to be wholly given up to him, and all our affections to be regulated as he directs. We are to love and hate, to rejoice and grieve, to desire and shun, to hope and fear, according to the rule which he prescribes, whose we are, and whom we are, to serve in all things. Even our thoughts are not our own in this sense: they are not at our own disposal: but for every

every deliberate motion of our mind, we are accountable to our Master.

4. God has secondly, intrusted us with our *bodies*, (those exquisitely wrought machines, so *fearfully and wonderfully made*) with all the powers and members thereof. He has intrusted us with the organs of *sense*, of sight, hearing, and the rest: but none of these are given us as our own, to be employed according to our own will. None of these are *lent* us in such a sense, as to leave us at liberty to use them as we please for a season. No: we have received them on these very terms, that as long as they abide with us, we should employ them all, in that very manner, and no other, which he appoints.

5. It is on the same terms, that he has imparted to us that most excellent talent of *speech*. *Thou hast given me a tongue*, says the ancient writer, *that I may praise thee therewith*. For this purpose was it given to all the children of men, to be employed in glorifying God. Nothing therefore is more ungrateful, or more absurd, than to think or say, *our tongues are our own*. That cannot be, unless we have created ourselves, and so are independent on the Most High. Nay, but "it is he that hath made us, and not we ourselves:" the manifest consequence is, That he is still *Lord over us*, in this as in all other respects. It follows, that there is not a word of our tongue, for which we are not accountable to him.

6. To him we are equally accountable for the use of our *hands and feet*, and all the *members* of our body. These are so many talents which are committed to our trust, until the time appointed by the Father. Until then, we have the use of all these; but as stewards, not as proprietors: to the end, we should "render them not as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin, but as instruments of righteousness unto God."

7. God has intrusted us, thirdly, with a portion of *wordly goods*, with food to eat, raiment to put on,

on, and a place where to lay our head; with not only the necessities, but the conveniences of life. Above all, he has committed to our charge that precious talent, which contains all the rest, *money*: indeed it is unspeakably precious, if we are *wise and faithful stewards* of it; if we imploy every part of it for such purposes as our blessed Lord has commanded us to do.

8. God has intrusted us, fourthly, with several talents, which do not properly come under any of these heads: such is bodily *strength*: such are *health*, a pleasing *person*, an agreeable *address*: such are *learning* and *knowledge* in their various degree, with all the other advantages of *education*. Such is the *influence* which we have over others, whether by their *love* and *esteem* of us, or by *power*; power to do them good or hurt, to help or hinder them in the circumstances of life. Add to these, that invaluable talent of *time*, with which God intrusts us from moment to moment. Add, lastly, that on which all the rest depend, and without which they would all be curses, not blessings: namely, the *grace* of God, the power of his Holy Spirit, which alone worketh in us all that is acceptable in his sight.

II. 1. In so many respects are the children of men, stewards of the Lord, *the Possessor of heaven and earth*. So large a portion of his goods, of various kinds, hath he committed to their charge. But it is not for ever, nor indeed for any considerable time. We have this trust reposed in us, only during the short, uncertain space that we sojourn here below: only so long as we remain on earth, as this fleeting breath is in our nostrils. The hour is swiftly approaching, it is just at hand, when we *can be no longer stewards*. The moment the body "returns to the dust as it was, and the Spirit to God that gave it," we bear that character no more; the time of our stewardship is at an end.

Part of those goods wherewith we were before intrusted, are now come to an end: at least they are so with regard to *us*; nor are we any longer intrusted with them: and that part which remains, can no longer be employed or improved as it was before.

2. Part of what we were intrusted with before, is at an end, at least with regard to *us*. What have we to do, after this life, with food and raiment, and houses, and earthly possessions? The food of the dead is the dust of the earth: they are clothed only with worms and rottenness. They dwell in "the house prepared for all flesh:" their lands know them no more. All their worldly goods are delivered into other hands, and they have "no more portion under the sun."

3. The case is the same with regard to the *body*. The moment the spirit returns to God, we are no longer stewards of this machine, which is then sown in corruption and dishonour. All the parts and members of which it was composed, lie mouldering in the clay. The hands have no longer power to move; the feet have forgot their office; the flesh, the sinews, the bones, are all hastening to be dissolved into common dust.

4. Here ends also the talents of a *mixt* nature, our *strength*, our *health*; our *beauty*, our *eloquence*, and *address*; our faculty of pleasing, of persuading, or convincing others. Here end likewise all the *honours* we once enjoyed, all the *power* which was lodged in our hands, all the *influence* which we once had over others, either by the love or the esteem which they bore us. "Our love, our hatred, our desire is perished:" none regard how we were once affected toward them. They look upon the dead as neither able to help nor hurt them; so that "a living dog is better than a dead lion."

5. Perhaps a doubt may remain concerning some of the other talents wherewith we are now intrusted, whether they will cease to exist when the body
returns

returns to dust, or only cease to be improveable. Indeed there is no doubt, but the kind of *speech* which we now use, by means of these bodily organs, will then be intirely at an end, when those organs are destroyed. It is certain the tongue will no more occasion any vibrations in the air: neither will the ear convey these tremulous motions to the common sensory. Even the *sonus exilis*, the low, shrill voice, which the poet supposes to belong to a separate spirit, we cannot allow to have a real being; it is a mere flight of imagination. Indeed it cannot be questioned, but separate spirits have some way to communicate their sentiments to each other: but what inhabitant of flesh and blood can explain that way? What we term *speech*, they cannot have. So that we can no longer be stewards of this talent, when we are numbered with the dead.

6. It may likewise admit of a doubt, whether our *senses* will exist, when the organs of sense are destroyed. Is it not probable, that those of the lower kind will cease; the feeling, the smell, the taste, as they have a more immediate reference to the body, and are chiefly, if not wholly intended for the preservation of it? But will not some kind of *sight* remain, although the eye be closed in death? And will there not be something in the soul, equivalent to the present sense of *hearing*? Nay, is it not probable, that these will not only exist in the seperate state, but exist in a far greater degree, in a more eminent manner than now? When the soul, disintangled from its clay, is no longer "A dying spark in a cloudy place:" when it no longer "Looks through the windows of the eye and ear." But rather is all eye, all ear, all sense, in a manner we cannot yet conceive. And have we not a clear proof of the possibility of this, of seeing without the use of the eye, and hearing without the use of the ear? Yea, an earnest of it continually? For does not the soul see, in the clearest

clearest manner, when the eye is of no use, namely, in dreams? Does she not then enjoy the faculty of hearing, without any help from the ear? But however this be, certain it is, that neither will our *senses*, any more than our *speech*, be intrusted to us in the manner they are now, when the body lies in the silent grave.

7. How far the *knowledge or learning* which we have gained by *education*, will then remain, we cannot tell. Solomon indeed says, "There is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom, in the grave whither thou goest." But it is evident, these words cannot be understood in an absolute sense. For it is so far from being true, that there is no *knowledge* after we have quitted the body, that the doubt lies on the other side, whether there be any such thing as real knowledge till then? Whether it be not a plain, sober truth, not a mere poetical fiction, that

"All these shadows which for things we take,

"Are but the empty dreams, which in death's sleep we make?"

Only excepting those things which God himself has been pleased to reveal to man. I will speak for one: after having sought for truth with some diligence for half a century, I am at this day hardly sure of any thing, but what I learn from the Bible. Nay, I positively affirm, I *know nothing* else so certainly, that I would dare to stake my salvation upon it.

So much however we may learn from Solomon's words, that *there is no such knowledge or wisdom in the grave*, as will be of any use to an unhappy spirit; there is *no device* there, whereby he can then improve those talents, with which he was once intrusted. For *time* is no more: the time of our trial for everlasting happiness or misery is past. *One day*, the day of man, is over; *the day of salvation is ended*. Nothing now remains but
the

the day of the Lord, ushering in, wide, unchangeable eternity.

8. But still our souls, being incorruptible and immortal, of a nature "little lower than the angels," (even if we are to understand that phrase of our original nature, which may well admit of a doubt) when our bodies are mouldered into earth, will remain with all their faculties. Our *memory*; our *understanding* will be so far from being destroyed, yea, or impaired by the dissolution of the body, that on the contrary, we have reason to believe, they will be inconceivably strengthened. Have we not the clearest reason to believe, that they will then be wholly freed from those defects, which now naturally result from the union of the soul with the corruptible body? It is highly probable, that from the time these are disunited, our memory will let nothing slip: yea, that it will faithfully exhibit every thing to our view, which was ever committed to it. It is true, that the invisible world is in Scripture termed "the land of forgetfulness;" or as it is still more strongly expressed in the old translation, "the land where all things are forgotten." They are forgotten; but by whom? Not by the inhabitants of that land, but by the inhabitants of the earth. It is with regard to them that the unseen world is *the land of forgetfulness*. *All things* therein are too frequently forgotten by these; but not by disembodied spirits. From the time they have put off the earthly tabernacle, we can hardly think they forget any thing.

9. In like manner the *understanding* will doubtless be freed, from the defects that are now inseparable from it. For many ages it has been an unquestioned maxim, *Humanum est errare & nescire*: ignorance and mistake are inseparable from human nature. But the whole of this assertion is only true, with regard to living men, and holds no longer, than while "the corruptible body presses down the soul." Ignorance indeed belongs to every

finite understanding, seeing there is none beside God that knoweth all things: but not mistake. When the body is laid aside, this also is laid aside for ever.

10. What then can we say to an ingenious man, who has lately made a discovery, that disembodied spirits have not only no *senses* (not even sight or hearing) but no *memory* or *understanding*, no *thought* or perception, not so much as a *consciousness* of their own existence? That they are in a dead sleep from death to the resurrection? *Consanguineus lethi sapor* indeed! Such a sleep we may well call a near kinsman of death, if it be not the same thing. What can we say, but that ingenious men have strange dreams: and these they sometimes mistake for realities.

11. But to return. As the soul will retain its understanding and memory, notwithstanding the dissolution of the body, so undoubtedly the *will*, including all the *affections*, will remain in its full vigour. If our love or anger, our hope or desire perish, it is only with regard to those whom we leave behind. To them it matters not, whether they were the objects of our love or hate, of our desire or aversion. But in separate spirits themselves, we have no reason to believe, that any of these are extinguished. It is more probable, that they work with far greater force, than while the soul was clogged with flesh and blood.

12. But although all these, although both our knowledge and senses, our memory and understanding, together with our will, our love, hate, and all our affections, remain after the body is dropt off, yet in this respect they are as though they were not, we are no longer stewards of them. The things continue, but our stewardship does not: we no more act in that capacity. Even the *grace* which was formerly intrusted with us in order to enable us to be faithful and wise Stewards, is now no longer intrusted

intrusted for that purpose. The days of our Stewardship are ended.

III. 2. It now remains, that being *no longer Stewards*, we *give an account* of our *Stewardship*. Some have imagined, this is to be done immediately after death, as soon as we enter into the world of spirits. Nay, the church of Rome does absolutely assert this: yea, make it an article of faith. And thus much we may allow, the moment a soul drops the body, and stands naked before God, it cannot but know what its portion will be to all eternity. It will have full in its view, either everlasting joy, or everlasting torment: as it is no longer possible to be deceived, in the judgment which we pass upon ourselves. But the Scripture gives us no reason to believe, that God will then sit in judgment upon us. There is no passage in all the Oracles of God, which affirms any such thing. That which has been frequently alledged for this purpose, seems rather to prove the contrary: namely, (Heb. ix. 27,) "It is appointed for men once to die, and after this, the judgment." For in all reason, the word *once* is here to be applied, to judgment as well as death. So that the fair inference to be drawn from this very text, is, not that there are two judgments, a particular and a general; but that we are to be judged as well as to die, once only: not once immediately after death, and again after the general resurrection; but then only "when the Son of Man shall come in his glory, and all his holy angels with him." The imagination therefore of one judgment at death, and another at the end of the world, can have no place with those who make the written word of God, the whole and sole standard of their faith.

2. The time then when we are to give this account, is when the "great white throne comes down from heaven, and he that sitteth thereon, from whose face the heavens and the earth flee

away, and there is found no place for them." It is then "the dead small and great, will stand before God: and the books will be opened;" the Book of Scripture, to them who were entrusted therewith, the Book of Conscience to all mankind. The *Book of Remembrance* likewise, (to use another scriptural expression) which has been written from the foundation of the world, will then be laid open to the view of all the children of men. Before all these, even the whole human race, before the devil and his angels, before an innumerable company of holy angels, and before God the Judge of all: thou wilt appear, without any shelter or covering, without any possibility of disguise, to give a particular account of the manner wherein thou hast employed all thy Lord's goods.

3. The Judge of all will then enquire, "How didst thou employ thy *soul*? I intrusted thee with an immortal spirit, endowed with various powers and faculties, with "understanding, imagination, memory, will, affections. I gave thee withal full and express directions, how all these were to be employed. Didst thou employ thy *understanding*, as far as it was capable, according to those directions, namely, in the knowledge of thyself and me? My nature, my attributes? My works, whether of creation, of providence, or of grace? In acquainting thyself with my word? In using every means to increase thy knowledge thereof? In meditating thereon day and night! Didst thou employ thy *memory* according to my will? In treasuring up whatever knowledge thou hadst acquired, which might conduce to my glory, to thy own salvation, or the advantage of others? Didst thou store up therein, not things of value, but whatever instruction thou hast learned from my word: and whatever experience thou hast gained, of my wisdom, truth, power, and mercy? Was thy *imagination* employed, not in painting vain images, much less such as nourished *foolish and hurtful desires*,

fires, but in representing to thee whatever would profit thy soul and awaken thy pursuit of wisdom and holiness? Didst thou follow my directions with regard to thy *will*? Was it wholly given up to me? Was it swallowed up in mine, so as never to oppose, but always run parallel with it? Were thy *affections* placed and regulated in such a manner, as I appointed in my word? Didst thou give me thy heart? Didst thou not love the world, neither the things of the world? Was I the object of thy love? Was all thy desire unto me, and unto the remembrance of my name? Was I the joy of thy heart, the delight of thy soul, the chief among ten thousand? Didst thou sorrow for nothing but what grieved my spirit? Didst thou fear and hate nothing but sin? Did the whole stream of thy affections flow back to the ocean from whence they came? Were thy *thoughts* employed according to my will? Not in ranging to the ends of the earth, not on folly, or sin; but on *whatsoever things were pure, whatsoever things were holy*, or whatsoever was conducive to my glory, and to *peace and good-will among men.*"

4. Thy Lord will then enquire, "How didst thou employ the *body* wherewith I entrusted thee? I gave thee a *tongue*, to praise me therewith: Didst thou use it to the end for which it was given? Didst thou employ it, not in evil-speaking or idle-speaking, not in uncharitable or unprofitable conversation: but in such as was good, as was necessary or useful, either to thyself or others? Such as always tended, directly or indirectly, to *minister grace to the hearers*? I gave thee, together with thy other *senses*, those grand avenues of knowledge, *sight and hearing*: were these employed to those excellent purposes for which they were bestowed upon thee? In bringing thee in more and more instruction in righteousness and true holiness? I gave thee hands and feet, and various *members*, wherewith to perform the works which were pre-

pared for thee: were they employed, not in doing *the will of the flesh*, of thy evil nature, or *the will of the mind*, (the things to which thy reason or fancy led thee,) but *the will of him that sent thee* into the world, merely to work out thy own salvation? Didst thou present all thy members, not to sin, as instruments of unrighteousness, but to me alone, through the Son of my love, *as instruments of righteousness?* ”

The Lord of all will next enquire, “ How didst thou employ the *worldly goods* which I lodged in thy hands? Didst thou use thy food, not so as to seek or place thy happiness therein, but so as to preserve the body in health, in strength, and vigour, a fit instrument for the soul? Didst thou use apparel, not to nourish pride or vanity, much less to tempt others to sin, but conveniently and decently to defend thyself from the injuries of the weather? Didst thou prepare and use thy house and all other conveniences, with a single eye to my glory? In every point seeking not thy own honour, but mine: studying to please not thyself, but me? Once more: in what manner didst thou employ that comprehensive talent, *money*? Not in gratifying the desire of the flesh, the desire of the eye, or the pride of life? Not squandering it away in vain expences, the same as throwing it into the sea? Not hoarding it up to leave behind thee, the same as burying it in the earth? But first supplying thy own reasonable wants, together with those of thy family: then restoring the remainder to me, through the poor, whom I had appointed to receive it: looking upon thyself as only one of that number of poor, whose wants were to be supplied out of that part of my substance which I had placed in thy hands for this purpose: leaving thee the right of being supplied first, and the blessedness of giving rather than receiving? Was thou accordingly a general benefactor to mankind? Feeding the hungry, clothing the naked, comforting the sick, assist-

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ing the stranger, relieving the afflicted according to their various necessities? Wast thou eyes to the blind, and feet to the lame? A father to the fatherless, and an husband to the widow? And didst thou labour to improve all outward works of mercy, as means of saving souls from death?"

6. Thy Lord will farther enquire, "Hast thou been a wise and faithful Steward, with regard to the talents of a mixt nature which I lent thee? Didst thou employ thy *health* and *strength*, not in folly or sin, not in the pleasures which perished in the using, "not in making provision for the flesh, to fulfil the desires thereof," but in a vigorous pursuit of that better part which none could take away from thee? Didst thou employ whatever was pleasing in thy *person* or *address*, whatever advantages thou hadst by *education*, whatever share of *learning*, whatever *knowledge* of things or men was committed to thee, for the promoting of virtue in the world, for the enlargement of my kingdom? Didst thou employ whatever share of *power*, thou hadst, whether *influence* over others, by the love or esteem of thee which they had conceived, for the increase of their wisdom and holiness? Didst thou employ that inestimable talent of *time*, with wariness and circumspection, as duly weighing the value of every moment, and knowing that all were numbered in eternity? Above all, wast thou a good Steward of my *grace*, preventing, accompanying, and following thee? Didst thou duly observe and carefully improve all the influences of my spirit? Every good desire? Every measure of light? All his sharp and gentle reproofs? How didst thou profit by the *spirit of bondage and fear*, which was previous to the *spirit of adoption*? And when thou was made a partaker of his spirit, crying in thy heart, *Abba, Father*, didst thou stand fast in the glorious liberty wherewith I made thee free? Didst thou from thenceforth present thy soul and body, all thy thoughts, thy words, and actions,

actions, in one flame of love, as an holy sacrifice, glorifying me with thy body and thy spirit? Then *well done, good and faithful servant! Enter thou into the joy of thy Lord!*" And what will remain, either to the faithful or unfaithful Steward? Nothing but the execution of that sentence, which has been passed by the righteous Judge: fixing thee in a state which admits of no change, through everlasting ages. It remains only, that thou be rewarded to all eternity, according to thy works.

IV. 1. From these plain considerations we may learn, first, how important is this short, uncertain day of life! How precious above all utterance, above all conception, is every portion of it!

"The least of these a serious care demands:
For though they are little, they are golden
sands!"

How deeply does it concern every child of man, to let none of these run to waste; but improve them all to the noblest purposes, as long as the breath of God is in his nostrils!

2. We learn from hence, secondly, that there is no employment of our time, no action or conversation that is purely *indifferent*. All is good or bad, because all our time, as every thing we have, is *not our own*. All these are as our Lord speaks, τὰ ἀλλότρια, the property of another; of God, our Creator. Now these either are, or are not employed, according to his will. If they are so employed, all is good; if they are not, all is evil. Again: it is his will, that we should continually grow in grace, and in the living knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. Consequently, every thought, word, and work whereby this knowledge is increased, whereby we grow in grace, is good: and every one whereby this knowledge is not increased, is truly and properly evil.

3. We

3. We learn from hence thirdly, that there are no works of supererogation; that we can never do more than our duty: seeing all we have is not our own, but God's; all we can do is due to him. We have not received this or that, or many things only, but every thing from him: therefore every thing is his due. He that gives us all, must needs have a right to all: So that if we pay him any thing less than all, we cannot be *faithful Stewards*. And considering *every man shall receive his own reward, according to his own labour*, we cannot be *wise Stewards*, unless we labour to the uttermost of our power: not leaving any thing undone, which we possibly can do, but putting forth all our strength.

4. Brethren, "Who is an understanding man and endued with knowledge among you?" Let him shew the wisdom from above, by walking suitably to his character. If he so account of himself, as a Steward of the manifold gifts of God, let him see that all his thoughts, and words, and works be agreeable to the post God has assigned him. It is no small thing, to lay out for God all which you have received from God. It requires all your wisdom, all your resolution, all your patience and constancy: far more than ever you had by nature; but not more than you may have by grace. For his grace is sufficient for you; and "all things," you know, "are possible to him that believeth." By faith then, "put on the Lord Jesus Christ:" "put on the whole armour of God," and you shall be enabled to glorify him in all your words and works, yea, to bring every thought into the obedience of Christ.

EDINBURGH,

May, 15, 1768.

SERMON

SERMON XLVI.

THE SCRIPTURE-WAY OF SALVATION:

EPHESIANS II. 8.

"Ye are saved through Faith."

1. **N**OTHING can be more intricate, complex, and hard to be understood, than religion as it has often been described. And this is not only true concerning the religion of the Heathens, even many of the wisest of them, but concerning the religion of those also who were in some sense, Christians: yea, and men of great name in the christian world, men, *who seemed to be pillars* thereof. Yet how easy to be understood, how plain and simple a thing is the genuine religion of Jesus Christ! Provided only that we take it in its native form, just as it is described in the oracles of God. It is exactly suited by the wise Creator and Governor of the world, to the weak understanding, and narrow capacity, of man in his present state. How observable is this, both with regard to the end it proposes, and the means to attain that end! The end is, in one word, salvation: the means to attain it, Faith.

2. It is easily discerned, that these two little words, I mean faith and salvation, include the substance of all the Bible, the marrow, as it were, of the whole scripture. So much the more should we take all possible care, to avoid all mistake concerning them, and to form a true and accurate judgment concerning both the one and the other.

Let

Let us then seriously enquire

I. What is salvation?

II. What is that faith whereby we are saved,
and

III. How we are saved by it?

I. 1. And, First, let us enquire, What is *salvation*? The salvation which is here spoken of, is not what is frequently understood by that word, the going to heaven, eternal happiness. It is not the soul's going to paradise, termed by our Lord *Abraham's bosom*. It is not a blessing which lies on the other side death, or (as we usually speak) in the other world. The very words of the text itself, put this beyond all question. *Ye are saved*. It is not something at a distance: it is a present thing; a blessing, which through the free mercy of God, ye are now in possession of. Nay, the words may be rendered, and that with equal propriety, *Ye have been saved*. So that the salvation which is here spoken of, might be extended to the entire work of God, from the first dawning of grace in the soul, till it is consummated in glory.

2. If we take this in its utmost extent, it will include all that is wrought in the soul, by what is frequently termed, *natural conscience*, but more properly, *preventing grace*: all the *drawings of the Father*, the desires after God which, if we yield to them, increase more and more: all that *light*, wherewith the Son of God "enlighteneth every one that cometh into the world," *shewing* every man, "to do justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with his God:" all the *convictions* which his Spirit, from time to time, works in every child of man. Although it is true, the generality of men stifle them as soon as possible; and after awhile forget, or at least deny, that ever they had them at all.

3. But we are at present concerned only with that salvation, which the Apostle is directly speaking

ing of. And this consists of two general parts, justification and sanctification.

Justification is another word for pardon. It is the forgiveness of all our sins, and (what is necessarily implied therein) our acceptance with God. The price whereby this hath been procured for us, (commonly termed the *meritorious cause* of our justification) is the blood and righteousness of Christ, or (to express it a little more clearly) all that Christ hath done and suffered for us, till he "poured out his soul for the transgressors." The immediate effects of justification are, the peace of God, a "peace that passeth all understanding," and a "rejoicing in hope of the glory of God, with joy unspeakable and full of glory."

4. And at the same time we are justified, yea in that very moment, *sanctification* begins. In that instant, we are "born again, born from above, born of the Spirit." There is a *real* as well as a *relative* change. We are inwardly renewed by the power of God. We feel "the love of God shed abroad in our heart, by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us," producing love to all mankind, and more especially to the children of God: expelling the love of the world, the love of pleasure, of ease, of honour, of money; together with pride, anger, self-will, and every other evil temper; in a word, changing the *earthly, sensual, devilish mind*, into "the mind which was in Christ Jesus."

5. How naturally do those who experience such a change, imagine that all sin is gone? That it is utterly rooted out of their heart, and has no more any place therein? How easily do they draw that inference, I *feel* no sin, therefore I *have* none." It does not *stir*; therefore it does not *exist*: it has no *motion*, therefore it has no *being*.

6. But it is seldom long, before they are undeceived, finding sin was only suspended, not destroyed. Temptations return and sin revives, shewing

ing it was but stunned before, not dead. They now feel two principles in themselves, plainly contrary to each other, "the flesh lusting against the Spirit, nature opposing the grace of God. They cannot deny, that, although they still feel power to believe in Christ, and to love God; and although his Spirit still *witnesses with their spirit, that they are the children of God*: yet they feel in themselves, sometimes pride or self-will, sometimes anger or unbelief. They find one or more of these frequently *stirring* in their heart, though not *conquering*: yea, perhaps, "thrusting sore at them, that they may fall; but the Lord is their help."

7. How exactly did Macarius, fourteen hundred years ago, describe the present experience of the children of God? "The unskilful (or unexperienced) when grace operates, presently imagine, they have no more sin. Whereas they that have discretion cannot deny, that even we who have the grace of God, may be molested again.—For we have often had instances of some among the brethren, who have experienced such grace, as to affirm that they had no sin in them. And yet after all, when they thought themselves entirely freed from it, the corruption that lurked within, was stirred up anew, and they were well nigh burnt up."

8. From the time of our being *born again*, the gradual work of sanctification takes place. We are enabled "by the spirit to mortify the deeds of the body;" of our evil nature. And as we are more and more dead to sin, we are more and more alive to God. We go on from grace to grace, we are careful to "abstain from all appearance of evil," and are "zealous of good works," as we have opportunity of doing good to all men. While we walk in all his ordinances blameless, therein worshipping him in spirit and in truth:

while we take up our cross, and deny ourselves of every pleasure, that does not lead us to God.

9. It is thus that we wait for entire sanctification, for a full salvation from all our sins, from pride, self-will, anger, unbelief: or as the Apostle expresses it, "go on to perfection." But what is perfection? The word has various senses: here it means, perfect love. It is love excluding sin: love filling the heart, taking up the whole capacity of the soul. It is love "rejoicing evermore, praying without ceasing, and in every thing giving thanks."

II. But what is that *Faith* through which we are saved? This is the second point to be considered.

1. Faith in general is defined by the Apostle "Ελεγχ^{ος} πραγμάτων ἔβλεπομένων. *An evidence, a divine evidence and conviction*, (the word means both) *of things not seen*: not visible, not perceivable either by sight, or by any other of the external senses. It implies both a supernatural *evidence* of God and of the things of God, a kind of spiritual *light* exhibited to the soul, and a supernatural *sight* or perception thereof: accordingly the scripture speaks sometimes of God's giving light, sometimes a power of discerning it. So St. Paul, "God who commanded light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give us the light of the knowledge of the glory of God, in the face of Jesus Christ." And elsewhere the same Apostle speaks of the eyes of our understanding being opened. By this two-fold operation of the Holy Spirit, having the eyes of our soul both *opened* and *enlightened*, we see the things which the natural "eye hath not seen, neither the ear heard." We have a prospect of the invisible things of God: we see the *spiritual world*, which is all round about us, and yet no more discerned by our natural faculties, than if it had no being.

being. And we see the *eternal world*, piercing through the veil which hangs between time and eternity. Clouds and darkness then rest upon it no more, but we already see the glory which shall be revealed.

2. Taking the word in a more particular sense, faith is a divine evidence and conviction not only that "God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself;" but also that *Christ loved me, and gave himself for me*. It is by this faith, (whether we term it, the *essence* or rather a *property* thereof) that we *receive Christ*, that we receive him in all his offices, as our prophet, priest and king. It is by this that he is "made of God unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption."

3. "But is this the *faith of assurance*, or *faith of adherence*?" The scripture mentions no such distinction. The Apostle says, "There is one faith, and one hope of our calling," one Christian, saying faith, "as there is one Lord," in whom we believe, and "one God and Father of us all." And it is certain, this faith necessarily implies an *assurance* (which is here only another word for *evidence*, it being hard to tell the difference between them) that *Christ loved me, and gave himself for me*. For "he that believeth," with the true living faith, "hath the witness in himself:" "The Spirit witnesseth with his spirit, that he is a child of God." "Because he is a son, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into his heart, crying Abba, Father;" giving him an assurance that he is so, and a child-like confidence in him. But let it be observed, that, in the very nature of the thing, the assurance goes before the confidence. For a man cannot have a child-like confidence in God, till he knows he is a child of God. Therefore confidence, trust, reliance, adherence, or whatever else it be called, is not the first, as some

have supposed, but the second branch or act of faith.

4. It is by this faith we *are saved*, justified and sanctified, taking that word in its highest sense. But how are we justified and sanctified by faith? This is our third head of enquiry. And this being the main point in question, and a point of no ordinary importance, it will not be improper, to give it a more distinct and particular consideration.

III. 1. And first, How are we justified by Faith? In what sense is this to be understood? I answer, faith is the condition, and the only condition of justification. It is the condition: none is justified but he that believes; without faith no man is justified. And it is the only condition; this alone is sufficient for justification. Every one that believes is justified, whatever else he has or has not. In other words: no man is justified, till he believes: every man when he believes is justified.

2. "But does not God command us to *repent* also? Yea, and to "bring forth fruit meet for repentance?" To *cease*, for instance, *from doing evil*, and *learn to do well*? And is not both the one and the other of the utmost necessity? Inasmuch, that if we willingly neglect either, we cannot reasonably expect to be justified at all? But if this be so, how can it be said, that faith is the only condition of justification.

God does undoubtedly command us, both to repent, and to bring forth fruits meet for repentance: which if we willingly neglect, we cannot reasonably expect to be justified at all: therefore both repentance and fruits meet for repentance, are in some sense necessary to justification. But they are not necessary in the *same sense* with faith, nor in the *same degree*. Not in the *same degree*; for those fruits are only necessary *conditionally*; if there be time and opportunity for them. Otherwise a man may be justified without them, as was the *thief* upon the *cross*: (if we may call

call him so ; for a late writer has discovered him to be a very honest and respectable person !) but he cannot be justified without faith : this is impossible. Likewise let a man have ever so much repentance, or ever so many of the fruits meet for repentance, yet all this does not at all avail : he is not justified till he believes. But the moment he believes, with or without those fruits, yea, with more or less repentance, he is justified. Not in the *same sense* ; for repentance and its fruits are only *remotely* necessary, necessary in order to faith : whereas faith is *immediately* and *directly* necessary to justification. It remains, that faith is the only condition, which is *immediately* and *proximately* necessary to justification.

3. " But do you believe, we are sanctified by faith ? We know you believe, that we are justified by faith : but do not you believe, and accordingly teach, that we are sanctified by our works ? " So it has been roundly and vehemently affirmed, for these five and twenty years. But I have constantly declared just the contrary : and that in all manner of ways. I have continually testified in private and public, That we are sanctified as well as justified, by faith. And indeed the one of these great truths does exceedingly illustrate the other. Exactly as we are justified by faith, so are we sanctified by faith. Faith is the condition, and the only condition of sanctification, exactly as it is of justification. It is the condition ; none is sanctified but he that believes ; without faith no man is sanctified. And it is the only condition : this alone is sufficient for sanctification. Every one that believes is sanctified, whatever else he has or has not. In other words : no man is sanctified till he believes : every man when he believes is sanctified.

4. " But is there not a repentance consequent upon, as well as a repentance previous to justification ? And is it not incumbent on all that are

justified, to be *zealous of good works*? Yea, are not these so necessary, that if a man willingly neglect them, he cannot reasonably expect, that he shall ever be sanctified in the full sense, that is *perfected in love*? Nay, can he *grow at all in the grace, in the loving knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ*? Yea, can he retain the grace which God has already given him? Can he continue in the faith which he has received, or in the favour of God? Do not yourself allow all this, and continually assert it? But if this be so, how can it be said, that faith is the only condition of sanctification?"

5. I do allow all this, and continually maintain it as the truth of God. I allow, there is a repentance consequent upon, as well as a repentance previous to justification. It is incumbent on all that are justified to be zealous of good works. And these are so necessary, that if a man willingly neglect them, he cannot reasonably expect, that he shall ever be sanctified; he cannot *grow in grace*, in the image of God, the mind which was in Christ Jesus; nay, he cannot retain the grace he has received, he cannot continue in faith, or in the favour of God.

What is the inference we must draw herefrom? Why, that both repentance, rightly understood, and the practice of all good works, works of piety, as well as works of mercy, (now properly so called, since they spring from faith) are in some sense necessary to sanctification.

6. I say, "Repentance rightly understood." For this must not be confounded with the former repentance. The repentance consequent upon justification is widely different from that which is antecedent to it. This implies no guilt, no sense of condemnation, no consciousness of the wrath of God. It does not suppose any doubt of the favour of God, or *fear that hath torment*. It is properly
a con-

a conviction wrought by the Holy Ghost, of the *sin* which still *remains* in our heart, of the *φρονιμα σαρκος*, the carnal mind, which "does still remain," as our church speaks, "even in them that are regenerate:" although it does no longer reign, it has not now dominion over them. It is a conviction of our proneness to evil, of an *heart bent to backsliding*, of the still continuing tendency of the *flesh to lust against the Spirit*. Sometimes, unless we continually watch and pray, it lusteth to pride, sometimes to anger, sometimes to love of the world, love of ease, love of honour, or love of pleasure more than of God. It is a conviction of the tendency of our heart to self-will, to atheism, or idolatry: and above all to unbelief, whereby in a thousand ways, and under a thousand pretences, we are ever *departing*, more or less, *from the living God*.

7. With this conviction of the *sin remaining* in our hearts, there is joined a clear conviction of the *sin remaining* in our lives, still *cleaving* to all our words and actions. In the best of these we now discern a mixture of evil, either in the spirit, the matter or manner of them: something that could not endure the righteous judgment of God, were he "extreme to mark what is done amiss." Where we at least of all suspected it, we find a taint of pride or self-will, of unbelief or idolatry: so that we are now more ashamed of our best duties, than formerly of our worst sins: and hence we cannot but feel, that these are so far from having any thing meritorious in them, yea so far from being able to stand, in sight of the divine justice, that for those also we should be guilty before God, were it not for the blood of the covenant.

8. Experience shews that, together with the conviction of *sin remaining* in our hearts and *cleaving* to all our words and actions, as well as the guilt which on account thereof we should incur, were we not continually sprinkled with the
atoning

atonement blood. One thing more is implied in this repentance, namely a conviction of our helplessness, of our utter inability to think one good thought, or to form one good desire: and much more to speak one word aright, or to perform one good action, but through his free, almighty grace first preventing us, and then accompanying us every moment.

9. "But what good works are those, the practice of which you affirm to be necessary to *sanctification*?" First, all works of piety, such as public prayer, family prayer, and praying in our closet: receiving the supper of the Lord: searching the scriptures by hearing, reading, meditating: and using such a measure of fasting and abstinence, as our bodily health allows.

10. Secondly, All works of mercy, whether they relate to the bodies or souls of men. Such as feeding the hungry, clothing the naked, entertaining the stranger, visiting those that are in prison, or sick, or variously afflicted. Such as the endeavouring to instruct the ignorant, to awaken the stupid sinner, to quicken the lukewarm, to confirm the wavering, to comfort the feeble-minded, to succour the tempted, or contribute in any manner to the saving of souls from death. This is the repentance, and these the fruits meet for repentance, which are necessary to full *sanctification*. This is the way wherein God hath appointed his children to wait for compleat salvation.

11. Hence may appear the extreme mischievousness of that seemingly innocent opinion, that "there is no sin in a believer; that all sin is destroyed, root and branch, the moment a man is *justified*." By totally preventing that repentance, it quite blocks up the way to *sanctification*, there is no place for repentance, in him who believes there is no sin either in his life or heart. Consequently there is no place for his being *perfected in love*.

love, to which that repentance is indispensably necessary.

12. Hence it may likewise appear, that there is no possible danger in *thus* expecting full salvation. For suppose we were mistaken, suppose no such blessing ever was, or can be attained, yet we lose nothing: nay, that very expectation quickens us; in using all the talents which God has given us; yea, in improving them all, so that when our Lord cometh, he will *receive his own with increase*.

13. But to return. Though it be allowed that both repentance and its fruits are necessary to full salvation; yet they are not necessary either in the *same sense* with faith, or in the *same degree*; not in the same degree; for these fruits are necessary *conditionally*, if there be time and opportunity for them, otherwise a man may be *sanctified* without them. But he cannot be *sanctified* without faith. Likewise let a man have ever so much of this repentance, or ever so many good works, yet all this does not at all avail: he is not *sanctified* till he believes. But the moment he believes, with or without those fruits, yea, with more or less of this repentance, he is *sanctified*. Not in the *same sense*; for this repentance and these fruits are only *remotely* necessary, necessary in order to the continuance of his faith, as well as the increase of it: whereas faith is *immediately* and *directly*, necessary to sanctification. It remains, that faith is the only condition, which is *immediately* and *proximately* necessary to *sanctification*.

14. "But what is that faith whereby we are *sanctified*, saved from sin and perfected in love?" It is a divine evidence and conviction, 1. That God hath promised it in the holy scripture. Till we are thoroughly satisfied of this, there is no moving one step further. And one would imagine, there needed not one word more, to satisfy a reasonable man of this, than the antient promise, "Then will I circumcise thy heart, and the heart of

of thy seed, to love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind." How clearly does this express the being perfected in love? How strongly imply the being saved from all sin? For as long as love takes up the whole heart, what room is there for sin therein?

15. It is a divine evidence and conviction, Secondly, that what God hath promised he is *able* to perform. Admitting therefore that *with men it is impossible*, to bring a clean thing out of an unclean, to purify the heart from all sin, and to fill it with all holiness; yet this creates no difficulty in the case, seeing "with God all things are possible." And surely no one ever imagined it was possible to any power less than that of the Almighty! But if God speaks, it shall be done. God saith, "Let there be light: and there is light."

16. It is, Thirdly, a divine evidence and conviction that he is able and willing to do it now. And why not? Is not a moment to him the same as a thousand years? He cannot want more time to accomplish whatever is his will. And he cannot want or stay for any more *worthiness* or *fitness* in the persons he is pleased to honour. We may therefore boldly say, at any point of time, "Now is the day of salvation." "To day, if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts." "Behold! all things are now ready, come unto the marriage."

17. To this confidence, that God is both able and willing to sanctify us *now*, there needs to be added one thing more, a divine evidence and conviction, that *he doth it*. In that hour it is done. God says to the inmost soul, "According to thy faith be it unto thee!" Then the soul is pure from every spot of sin; "it is clean from all unrighteousness." The believer then experiences the deep meaning of those solemn words, "If we walk in the light as he is in the light: we have fellowship

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fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus
Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin."

18. "But does God work this great work" in the soul *gradually* or *instantaneously*?" Perhaps it may be gradually wrought in some. I mean, in this sense, They do not advert to the particular moment, wherein sin ceases to be. But it is infinitely desirable, were it the will of God, that it should be done *instantaneously*; that the Lord should destroy sin *by the breath of his mouth*, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye. And so he generally does, a plain fact, of which there is evidence enough to satisfy any unprejudiced person. *Thou* therefore look for it every moment. Look for it in the way above described; in all those *good works* whereunto thou art "created anew in Christ Jesus." There is then no danger: you can be no worse, if you are no better for that expectation. For were you to be disappointed of your hope, still you lose nothing. But you shall not be disappointed of your hope: it will come, and will not tarry. Look for it then every day, every hour, every moment. Why not this hour, this moment? Certainly you may look for it *now*, if you believe it is by faith. And by this token you may surely know whether you seek it by faith or works. If by works, you want something to be done *first*, *before* you are sanctified. You think, "I must first *be* or *do* thus or thus." Then you are seeking it by works unto this day. If you seek it by faith, you may expect it *as you are*: then expect it *now*. It is of importance to observe that there is an inseparable connexion between these three points, expect it *by faith*, expect it *as you are*, and expect it *now*! To deny one of them is to deny them all. To allow one, is to allow them all. Do you believe, we are sanctified by faith? Be true then to your principle; and look for this blessing just as you are, neither better nor worse; as a poor sinner that has nothing to pay, nothing to plead, but *Christ died*.
And

And if you look for it as you are, then expect it *now*. Stay for nothing : why should you ? Christ is ready ; and he is all you want. He is waiting for you : he is at the door ! Let your inmost soul cry out,

“ Come in, come in, thou heavenly guest !
Nor hence again remove :
But sup with me, and let the feast
Be everlasting love.”

S E R M O N XLVII.

ON THE OMNIPRESENCE OF GOD.

JEREMIAH XXIII. 24.

“ Do not I fill heaven and earth ? saith the LORD.”

1. **H**OW strongly and beautifully do these words express the omnipresence of God ? And can there be in the whole compass of nature a more sublime subject ? Can there be any, more worthy the consideration of every rational creature ? Is there any more necessary to be considered, and to be understood,—so far as our poor faculties will admit ? How many excellent purposes may it answer ? What deep instruction may it convey to all the children of men ? And more directly to the children of God ?

2. How is it then that so little has been wrote on so sublime and useful a subject ? It is true that some of our most eminent writers have occasionally touched upon it, and have several strong and beautiful reflections, which were naturally suggested by it. But which of them has published a regular treatise, or so much as a sermon upon the head ?
Perhaps

Perhaps many were conscious of their inability to do justice to so vast a subject. It is possible, there may some such lie hid, in the voluminous writings of the last century. But if they are hid even in their own country, if they are buried in oblivion, it is the same, for any use they are of, as if they had never been wrote.

3. What seems to be wanting still, for general use, is a plain discourse on the Omnipresence, or Ubiquity of GOD. First, in some manner explaining and proving that glorious truth, God is in this, and every place: And then applying it to the conscience of all thinking men, in a few practical inferences.

I. 1. Accordingly, I will endeavour by the assistance of his Spirit, first, a little to explain the Omnipresence of God: To shew how we are to understand this glorious truth, God is in this, and every place. The Psalmist you may remember, speaks strongly and beautifully upon it, in the hundred and thirty-ninth Psalm: observing in the most exact order, first, God is in this place, and then God is in every place. He observes first, "Thou art about my bed, and about my path, and spiest out all my ways. (ver. 2.) Thou hast fashioned me behind and before, and laid thine hand upon me;" (ver. 4.) Although the *manner* thereof he could not explain: *how* it was, he could not tell. "Such knowledge, says he, is too wonderful for me: I cannot attain unto it," ver. 5. He next observes, in the most lively and affecting manner, That God is in every place. "Whither shall I go then from thy Spirit, or whither shall I go from thy presence? If I climb up into heaven, thou art there: if I go down to hell, thou art there also" (ver. 5, 6.) If I could ascend, speaking after the manner of men, to the highest part of the universe, or could I descend to the lowest point, thou art alike present both in one and the other. "If I

should take the wings of the morning, and remain in the uttermost parts of the sea: even there thy hand would lead me;" thy power and thy presence would be before me, "and thy right hand would hold me," seeing thou art equally in the length and breadth, and in the height and depth of the universe. Indeed thy presence and knowledge not only reach the utmost bounds of creation, but

Thine omnipresent sight,
Even to the pathless realms extends
Of uncreated night.

In a word, there is no point of space, whether within or without the bounds of creation, where God is not.

2. Indeed this subject is far too vast to be comprehended by the narrow limits of human understanding. We can only say, The great God, the eternal, the almighty Spirit, is as unbounded in his presence, as in his duration and power. In condescension indeed to our weak understanding, he is said, to *dwell in heaven*: but strictly speaking, the heaven of heavens cannot contain him, but he is in every part of his dominion. The universal God dwelleth in universal space: so that we may say,

" Hail, Father! whose creating call,
Unnumber'd worlds attend!
Jehovah, comprehending all,
Whom none can comprehend!"

3. If we may dare attempt the illustrating this a little farther, what is the space occupied by a grain of sand, compared to that space which is occupied by the starry heavens? It is as a cypher: it is nothing: it vanishes away in the comparison. What is it then to the whole expanse of space, to which the whole creation is infinitely less than a grain of sand? And yet this space to the whole creation bears no proportion at all, is infinitely less in comparison

parison of the great God than a grain of sand, yea, a millionth part of it, bears to that whole space.

II. 1. This seems to be the plain meaning of those solemn words, which God speaks of himself, "Do not I fill heaven and earth." And these sufficiently prove his Omnipresence: which may be farther proved from this consideration, God acts every where, and therefore is every where: for it is an utter impossibility that any being, created or uncreated, should work where it is not. God acts in heaven, in earth, and under the earth, throughout the whole compass of his creation; by sustaining all things, without which every thing would in an instant sink into its primitive nothing: by governing all, every moment superintending every thing that he has made; strongly and sweetly influencing all, and yet without destroying the liberty of his rational creatures. The very Heathens acknowledged, that the great God governs the large and conspicuous parts of the universe; that he regulates the motions of the heavenly bodies, of the sun, moon and stars: that he is

Vassem

Mens agitans molem, & toto se corpore miscens:

The all-informing soul,

That fills, pervades and actuates the whole,

But they had no conception of his having a regard to the least things as well as the greatest: of his presiding over all that he has made, and governing atoms as well as worlds. This we could not have known, unless it had pleased God to reveal it unto us himself. Had he not himself told us so, we should not have dared to think that "not a sparrow falleth to the ground, without the will of our father which is in heaven:" and much less affirm, that "even the very hairs of our head are all numbered!"

2. This comfortable truth, that "God filleth heaven and earth," we learn also from the Psalmist above recited. "If I climb up into heaven, thou art there, if I go down to hell, thou art there also. If I take the wings of the morning, and remain in the uttermost parts of the sea: even there thy hand shall lead me." The plain meaning is, *If I remove to any distance whatever, thou art there, thou still besettest me, and layest thine hand upon me. Let me flee to any conceivable or inconceivable distance, above, beneath, or on any side, it makes no difference; thou art still equally there: in thee I still live and move and have my being.*

3. And where no creature is, still God is there. The presence or absence of any or all creatures, makes no difference with regard to him. He is equally in all, or without all. Many have been the disputes among philosophers, whether there be any such thing as empty space in the universe? And it is now generally supposed, that all space is full. Perhaps it cannot be proved that all space is filled with matter. But the Heathen himself will bear us witness, *Jovis omnia plena*, "All things are full of God." Yea, and whatever space exists beyond the bounds of creation, (for creation must have bounds, seeing nothing is boundless, nothing can be, but the great Creator) even that space cannot exclude him who fills the heaven and the earth.

5. Just equivalent to this is the expression of the Apostle, Eph. ii. 23. (not as some have strangely supposed, concerning the church, but concerning the head of it.) "The fulness of him that filleth all in all:" *τά πάντα ἐν ᾧ ὅν*, literally translated *all things in all things*; the strongest expression of universality which can possibly be conceived. It necessarily includes the last and the greatest of all things that exist. So that if any expression could be stronger, it would be stronger than even that, the *filling heaven and earth.*

5. Indeed

5. Indeed this very expression, *Do not I fill heaven and earth*, (the question being equal to the strongest affirmation) implies the clearest assertion of God's being present every where, and filling all space. For it is well known the Hebrew phrase, *heaven and earth*, includes the whole universe, the whole extent of space, created or uncreated, and all that is therein.

6. Nay and we cannot believe the omnipotence of God, unless we believe his omnipresence. For seeing (as was observed before) nothing can act where it is not; if there were any space where God was not present, he would not be able to do any thing there. Therefore to deny the omnipresence of God, implies likewise the denial of his omnipotence. To set bounds to the one is undoubtedly to set bounds to the other also.

7. Indeed wherever we suppose him not to be, there we suppose all his attributes to be in vain. He cannot exercise there either his justice, or mercy, either his power or wisdom. In this extramundane space, (so to speak) where we suppose God not to be present, we must of course suppose him to have no duration; but as it is supposed to be beyond the bounds of the creation, so it is beyond the bounds of the Creator's power. Such is the blasphemous absurdity, which is implied in this supposition.

8. But to all that is or can be said, of the omnipresence of God, the world has one grand objection: They cannot see him. And this is really at the root of all their other objections. This our blessed Lord observed long ago; "Whom the world cannot receive, because they see him not." But is it not easy to reply, "Can you see the wind? You cannot. But do you therefore deny its existence or its presence?" You say, no: for I can perceive it by my other senses. "But by which of your senses do you perceive your soul? Surely you do not deny either the existence or the

presence of this! And yet it is not the object of your sight, or of any of your other senses. Suffice it then to consider, That God is a spirit, as is your soul also. Consequently, "him no man hath seen or can see," with eyes of flesh and blood.

III. 1. But allowing that God is here, as in every place, that he is "about our bed, and about our path," that he "besets us behind and before, and lays his hand upon us:" what inference should we draw from hence? What use should we make of this awful consideration? Is it not meet and right, to humble ourselves before the eyes of his majesty? Should we not labour, continually to acknowledge his presence, "with reverence and godly fear?" Not indeed with the fear of devils, that believe and tremble, but with the fear of angels, with something similar to that which is felt by the inhabitants of heaven, when

"Dark with excessive bright his skirts appear,
Yet dazzles heaven, that brightest seraphim
Approach not, but with both wings veil their
eyes."

2. Secondly, if you believe, that God is about your bed and about your path, and spieth out all your ways, then take care not to do the least thing, not to speak the least word, not to indulge the least thought, which you have reason to think would offend him. Suppose that a messenger of God, an angel, to be now standing at your right hand, and fixing his eyes upon you, would you not take care to abstain from every word or action, that you knew would offend him? Yea, suppose one of your mortal fellow servants, suppose only a holy man stood by you, would not you be extremely cautious, how you conducted yourself, both in word and action? How much more cautious ought you to be, when you know, that not a holy man, not an angel of God, but God himself, the Holy

One

One *that inhabiteth eternity* is inspecting your heart, your tongue, your hand, every moment? And that he himself will surely bring you into judgment, for all you think, and speak, and act under the sun!

3. In particular. If there is not a word in your tongue, not a syllable you speak, but he "knoweth it altogether;" how exact should you be in "setting a watch before your mouth, and in keeping the door of your lips?" How wary does it behove you to be in all your conversation, being forewarned by your Judge, that, "By your words you shall be justified, or by your words you shall be condemned?" How cautious, lest "any corrupt communication," any uncharitable, yea, or unprofitable discourse, should "proceed out of your mouth:" instead of "that which is good to the use of edifying, and meet to minister grace to the hearers!"

4. Yea, if God sees our hearts, as well as our hands, and in all places; if he understandeth our thoughts long before they are clothed with words; how earnestly should we urge that petition, "Search me, O Lord, and prove me; try out my reins and my heart: look well if there be any way of wickedness in me, and lead me in the way everlasting!" How needful is it, to work together with him, in "keeping our hearts with all diligence," till he hath "cast down imaginations, evil reasonings, and every thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and brought into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ."

5. On the other hand, if you are already listed under the great Captain of your salvation, seeing ye are continually under the eye of your captain, how zealous and active should you be, to "fight the good fight of faith, and lay hold on eternal life? to endure hardship as good soldiers of Jesus Christ," to use all diligence, to *war a good warfare*, and to do whatever is acceptable in his sight? How
studious

studious should you be to approve all your ways to his all-seeing eyes, that he may say to your hearts, what he will proclaim aloud in the great assembly of men and angels, "Well done, good and faithful servants."

6. In order to attain these glorious ends, spare no pains to preserve always, a deep, a continual, a lively and a joyful sense of his gracious presence. Never forget his comprehensive word to the great Father of the faithful, *I am the Almighty* (rather, the *All-sufficient*) *God, walk before me, and be thou perfect!* Cheerfully expect, that he before whom you stand, will ever guide you with his eye, will support you by his guardian hand, will keep you from all evil. And "when you have suffered a while, will make you perfect, will stablish, strengthen, and settle you: and then preserve you unblameable, unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ."

Portsmouth, August 12, 1788.

S E R M O N XLVIII.

DIVES AND LAZARUS.

LUKE XVI. 31.

"If they hear not Moses and the Prophets, neither will they be persuaded though one rose from the dead."

1. **H**OW strange a paradox is this! How contrary to the common apprehension of men! Who is so confirmed in unbelief, as not to think, "If one came to me from the dead, I should be effectually persuaded to repent?" But
this

this passage affords us a more strange saying, ver. 14 : "Ye cannot serve God and Mammon." "No! Why not? Why cannot we serve both?" will a true servant of Mammon say. Accordingly the Pharisees who supposed they served God, and did cordially serve Mammon, *derided him*: ἐξευνέγεζον; a word expressive of the deepest contempt. But he said, ver. 15, "Ye are they who justify yourselves before men: but God knoweth your hearts: and that which is highly esteemed among men, is [very commonly] an abomination before God:" a terrible proof of which our Lord subjoins in the remaining part of the chapter.

2. But is the subsequent account merely a parable, or a real history? It has been believed by many, and roundly asserted, to be a mere parable: because of one or two circumstances therein, which are not easy to be accounted for. In particular, it is hard to conceive, how a person in Hell, could hold conversation with one in Paradise. But admitting we cannot account for this, will it overbalance an express assertion of our Lord, There was, says our Lord, *a certain rich man*.—Was there not? Did such a man never exist? *And there was a certain beggar, named Lazarus*.—Was there, or was there not? Is it not bold enough positively to deny, what our blessed Lord positively affirms? Therefore we cannot reasonably doubt, but the whole narration, with all its circumstances, is exactly true. And Theophylact, (one of the antient commentators on the Scriptures,) observes upon the text, "That according to the tradition of the Jews, Lazarus lived at Jerusalem."

I propose with God's assistance, first to explain this history: Secondly to apply it: And Thirdly, to prove the truth of that weighty sentence with which it is concluded; namely, "If they hear not Moses and the Prophets, neither will they be persuaded though one rose from the dead."

I. 1. And,

1. 1. And, first, I will endeavour with God's assistance, to explain this history. "There was a certain rich man." And doubtless on that very account, highly esteemed among men. "Who was clothed in purple and fine linen:"—And consequently esteemed the more highly, both as appearing suitably to his fortune, and as an encourager of trade: "And fared sumptuously every day." Here was another reason for his being *highly esteemed*, his hospitality and generosity, but by those who frequently sat at his table, and the tradesmen that furnished it.

2. "And there was a certain beggar," one in the lowest line of human infamy, named Lazarus according to the Greek termination; in Hebrew, *Eleazer*. From this name we may gather that he was of no mean family, although this branch of it was at present so reduced. It is probable, he was well known in the city: and it was no scandal to him to be named.—"Who was laid at his gate," although no pleasing spectacle, so that one might wonder he was suffered to lie there; "full of sores," of running ulcers: "and desiring to be fed with the crumbs which fell from the rich man's table." So the complicated affliction of poverty, pain, and want of bread lay upon him at once! But it does not appear that any creature took the least notice of the despicable wretch! Only "the dogs came and licked his sores." All the comfort which this world afforded him!

3. But see the change! "The beggar died:"—Here ended poverty and pain: "and was carried by angels:"—nobler servants, than any that attended the rich man:—into *Abraham's bosom*: So the Jews commonly termed what our blessed Lord styles Paradise: the place "where the wicked cease from troubling, and where the weary are at rest:" the receptacle of holy souls, from death to the resurrection. It is indeed very generally supposed, that the souls of good men, as soon as they are discharged

charged from the body, go directly to heaven: but this opinion has not the least foundation in the Oracles of God: on the contrary, our Lord says to Mary after the resurrection, "Touch me not; for I am not yet ascended to my Father," in heaven. But he had been in Paradise, according to his promise to the penitent Thief; "This day shalt thou be with me in Paradise." Hence it is plain, that Paradise is not heaven. It is indeed, (if we may be allowed the expression) the antichamber of heaven, where the souls of the righteous remain, till after the General Judgment they are received into glory.

4. But see the scene changes again! "The rich man also died:"—What must rich men also die! Must they fall, "like one of the people?" Is there no help? A rich man in London some years ago when the Physician told him, "He must die," gnashed his teeth, and clenched his fist; and cried out vehemently, "God, God, I won't die!" But he died with the very words in his mouth! "And was buried:"—Doubtless with pomp enough suitable to his quality: although we do not find that there was then in all the world, that exquisite instance of human folly, that senseless cruel mockery of a poor putrifying carcase, what we term *lying in state*.

5. "And in hell he lifted up his eyes"—O what a change! How is the mighty fallen! But the word which is here rendered *hell*, does not always mean, the place of the damned. It is literally, *The invisible world*, and is of very wide extent, including the receptacle of separate Spirits whether good or bad. But here it evidently means, that region of Hades, where the souls of wicked men reside, as appears from the following words, "being in torments:"—In order, say some, "to atone for the sins committed while in the body, as well as to purify the soul from all its inherent sin." Just so the eminent heathen poet, near two thousand years ago:

"Necesse

“Necesse est

Multa diu concreta modis inolescere miris,
Ergo exercentur pænis.—

Aliæ panduntur inanes

Suspensæ ad ventos : aliis sub gurgite vasto
Infectum eluitur scelus, aut exuritur igni.”

See the near resemblance between the antient and the modern Purgatory ! Only in the antient, the heathen Purgatory, both fire, water, and air were employed in expiating sin, and purifying the soul : whereas in the mystic Purgatory, fire alone is supposed sufficient, both to purge and expiate ! Vain hope ! No suffering, but that of Christ, has any power to expiate sin : and no fire, but that of love, can purify the soul, either in time or in eternity.

6. “He seeth Abraham afar off.”—Far indeed ! As far as from Hell to Paradise. Perhaps “tenfold the length of this terrene.” But how could this be ? I cannot tell : but it is by no means incredible. For who knows, how “far an angel kens ?” Or a spirit divested of flesh and blood ? —“And Lazarus in his bosom.” It is well known, that in the antient feasts, among the Jews as well as the Romans, the guests did not *sit down* at the table, as it is now the custom to do, but lay on couches, each having a pillow at his left side, on which he supported his elbow. And he that sat next him, on the right side, was said to *lie in his bosom*. It was in this sense that the Apostle John lay in his *Master’s bosom*. Accordingly the expression of Lazarus lying in Abraham’s bosom, implies, that he was in the highest place of honour and happiness.

7. “And he cried, and said, Father Abraham, have mercy on me.”—Thou fool, what can Abraham do ? What can any creature, yea all the creation do, to break the bars of the bottomless pit ? Whoever would escape from the place of torment, let him cry to God, the Father of mercy ! Nay, but the time is past ! Justice now takes place, and

and rejoices over mercy! — “And send Lazarus that he may dip the tip of his finger in water and cool my tongue: for I am tormented in this flame!” How exceeding modest a request is this! He does not say, “That he may take me out of this flame.” He does not ask, That he may bring me a cup of water, or as much as he might hold in the palm of his hand. But barely, “That he may dip, were it but the tip of his finger in water, and cool my tongue.” No! It cannot be! No mercy can enter within the shades of Hell!

8. “But Abraham said, Son, remember that thou in thy life time receivedst thy good things, and likewise Lazarus evil things: but now he is comforted, and thou art tormented.” Perhaps these words may supply us with an answer to an important question: How came this *rich man* to be in Hell? It does not appear that he was a wicked man, in the common sense of the word: that he was a drunkard, a common swearer, a sabbath-breaker, or that he lived in any known sin. It is probable he was a Pharisee, and as such, was in all the outward parts of religion blameless. How then did he come into the *place of torment*? If there was no other reason to be assigned, there is a sufficient one implied in those words: (He that hath ears to hear, let him hear!) “Thou in thy life-time receivedst thy good things:”—the things, which thou hadst chosen for thy happiness. Thou hadst set thy affection on things beneath. And thou hadst thy reward. Thou didst receive the portion which thou hadst chosen, and canst have no portion above. “And likewise Lazarus evil things.”—Not *his* evil things; for he did not chuse them. But they were chosen for him by the wise providence of God: and now “he is comforted, while thou art tormented.”

9. “But beside all this, there is a great gulph fixt.”—A great chasm, a vast vacuity. Can any tell us, what this is? What is the nature, what

are the bounds of it? Nay, none of the children of men: none but an inhabitant of the invisible world. "So that they who would pass from hence to you, cannot; neither can they pass to us, that would come from thence." Undoubtedly a disembodied spirit could pass through any space whatever. But the will of God, determining that none should go across that gulph, is a bound which no creature can pass.

10. "Then he said, I pray thee therefore, Father, that thou wouldest send him to my father's house: for I have five brethren, that he may testify unto them, lest they also come into this place of torment," ver. 27, 28. Two entirely different motives have been assigned for this extraordinary request. Some ascribe it wholly to self-love, to a fear of the bitter reproaches, which he might easily suppose, his brethren would pour upon him, if in consequence of his example, and perhaps advice, they came to the same place of torment. Others have imputed it to a nobler motive. They suppose, as the misery of the wicked will not be compleat till the day of judgment, so neither will their wickedness. Consequently they believe, that till that time, they may retain some sparks of natural affection. And they not improbably imagine, that this may have occasioned his desire to prevent their sharing his own torment.

11. "Abraham saith unto him, They have Moses and the Prophets: let them hear them, ver. 29. And he said, Nay, father Abraham: but if one went to them from the dead, they will repent." Who would not be of the same opinion? Might not any one reasonably suppose, that a message solemnly delivered by one that came from the dead, must have an irresistible force? Who would not think, I myself could not possibly withstand such a preacher of repentance?

II. This,

II. This, I conceive to be the meaning of the words. I will now endeavour, with the help of God, to apply them. And I beseech you, brethren, while I am doing this, to suffer the word of exhortation. The more closely these things are applied to your souls, the more ye may profit thereby.

1. "There was a certain rich man." And it is no more sinful to be rich, than to be poor. But it is dangerous beyond expression. Therefore I remind all of you that are of this number, that have the conveniencies of life, and something over, that ye walk upon slippery ground. Ye continually tread on snares and deaths. Ye are every moment on the verge of hell. "It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for you to enter into the kingdom of heaven." "Who was clothed in purple and fine linen." And some may have a plea for this: our Lord mentions them that *dwell in King's houses*, as wearing *gorgeous*, that is, splendid *apparel*, and does not blame them for it. But certainly this is no plea, for any that do not dwell in King's houses. Let all of them therefore beware how they follow his example, who is *lifting up his eyes in hell*: let us follow the advice of the Apostle, being "adorned with good works, and with the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit."

2. He "fared sumptuously every day." Reconcile this with religion who can. I know how plausibly the prophets of smooth things can talk, in favour of Hospitality, of making our friends welcome, of keeping an handsome table, to do honour to religion, of promoting trade, and the like. But God is not mocked: He will not be put off with such pretences as these. Whoever thou art that sharest in the sin of this rich man were it no other than *faring sumptuously every day*, thou shalt as surely be a sharer in his punishment, except thou repent, as if thou wert already crying for a drop of water to cool thy tongue.

3. "And there was a certain beggar, named Lazarus, who was laid at his gate, full of sores. And desiring to be fed with the crumbs which fell from the rich man's table, ver. 20, 21. But it seems, both the rich man and his guests were too *religious* to relieve *common beggars*. A sin of which pious Mr. H. earnestly warns his Readers; and an admonition to the same kind, I have read on the gate of the good city of Winchester! I wish the gentlemen who placed it there had seen a little circumstance which occurred some years since. At Epworth in Lincolnshire, the town where I was born, a beggar came to a house in the Market-place, and begged a morsel of bread, saying, "She was very hungry." The master bid her be gone, for a lazy jade. She called at a second, and begged a little small beer, saying, "She was very thirsty." She had much the same answer. At a third door, she begged a little water, saying, "She was very faint." But this man also was too conscientious to encourage *common beggars*. The boys seeing a ragged creature turned from door to door, began to pelt her with snow-balls. She looked up, lay down and died! Would you wish to be the man, who refused that poor wretch a morsel of bread, or a cup of water? "Moreover the dogs came and licked his sores:" being more compassionate than their Master. "And it came to pass, that the beggar died, and was carried by angels into Abraham's bosom." Hear this, all ye that are poor in this world. Ye that many times have not food to eat, or raiment to put on: ye that have not a place where to lay your head, unless it be a cold garret, or a foul and damp cellar! Ye are now reduced to "Solicit the cold hand of charity." Yet lift up your load; it shall not always be thus. I love you, I pity you, I admire you, when "in patience ye possess your souls." Yet I cannot help you. But there is one that can, the Father of the fatherless, and the husband of the widow. "The poor crieth

crieth unto the Lord, and he heareth him, and delivereth him out of his troubles." Yet a little while, if ye truly turn to him, his angels shall carry you into Abraham's bosom. There ye shall "hunger no more, and thirst no more:" ye shall feel no more sorrow or pain; but "the Lamb shall wipe away all tears from your eyes, and lead you forth beside fountains of living waters."

4. But see, the scene is changed. "The rich man also died." What? In spite of his riches! Probably sooner than he desired. For how just is that word, "O death, how bitter art thou to a man that is at rest in the midst of his possessions?" However, if that would be a comfort, *he was buried*. But how little did it signify whether he was laid under a lofty monument, or among

"Graves with bending osiers crown'd,

"Where numbers heav'd the crumbled ground."

And what followed? "In hell he lifted his eyes." This it is certain *Ye* need not do. God does not require it of you; "He willeth not that any should perish." Ye cannot, unless by your own wilful choice, intruding into those regions of woe, which God did not prepare for *you*, but for the *devil and his angels*.

5. See the scene change again! "He seeth Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom." And he knew him: although perhaps he had only cast a glance at him, while he *lay at his gates*. Is any of you in doubt, whether we shall know one another in the other world? Here your doubt may receive a full solution. If a soul in hell knew Lazarus in Paradise, as *far off* as he was, certainly, those that are together in Paradise, will perfectly know each other.

6. "And he cried, and said, Father Abraham, have mercy upon me!" I do not remember in all the Bible, any prayer made to a Saint, but this. And if we observe, who made it, a man in hell, and

with what success, we shall hardly wish to follow the precedent. O let us cry for mercy to God, not to man! And it is our wisdom to cry now! while we are in the land of mercy; otherwise it will be too late!" I am tormented in this flame." Tormented, observe! not purified. Vain hope, that fire can purify a spirit! As well might you expect water to cleanse the soul as fire. God forbid, that you or I should make the trial!

7. And "Abraham said, Son, remember:"—Mark how Abraham accosts a damned spirit: And shall we behave with less tenderness to any of the children of God, "because they are not of our opinion!" "Thou in thy life-time receivedst thy good things." O beware it be not your case! Are not the things of the world thy good things? The chief objects of thy desire and pursuit? Are they not thy chief joy? If so, thou art in a very dangerous state, in the very condition which Dives was in upon earth! Do not then dream, that all is well, because thou art *highly esteemed among men!* Because thou doest no harm: or doest much good; or attendest all the ordinances of God: What is all this, if thy soul cleaves to the dust? If thy heart is in the world: if thou lovest the creature more than the Creator.

8. How striking are the next words! "Beside all this, between us and you there is a great gulph fixt, so that they who would pass from us to you cannot, neither can they pass to us that would come from thence." This was the text which occasioned the Epitaph on a right honourable infidel and gamester.

"Here lies a Dicer; long in doubt
If death could kill the soul, or not?
Here ends his doubtfulness: at last
Covinc'd—But ah! The die is cast!"

But blessed be God, *your* die is not cast yet. You are not passed the great gulph, but have it still in
your

your power, to chuse whether you will be attended by angels or fiends, when your soul quits its earthly mansion. Now stretch out your hand to eternal Life or eternal Death! And God says, "Be it unto thee, even as thou wilt!"

9. Being repulsed in this, he makes another request: "I pray thee send him to my father's house: for I have five brethren, that he may testify to them."—It is not impossible that other unhappy Spirits may wish well to the relations they have left behind them. But this is the accepted time, for them, as well as for us. Let us then address them ourselves: and let us beg our living friends to give us all the help they can, without waiting for assistance from the inhabitants of another world. Let us earnestly exhort them to use the helps they have; to *hear Moses and the Prophets*. We are indeed apt to think, like that unhappy Spirit, "If one went to them from the dead, they will repent. But Abraham said, If they hear not Moses and the Prophets, neither will they be persuaded though one rose from the dead."

III. I am, in the third place, to prove the truth of this weighty sentence, which I will do first briefly, and then more at large.

And first, to express the matter briefly. It is certain, that no human spirit, while it is in the body, can *persuade* another to *repent*; can work in him an entire change both of heart and life: a change from universal wickedness to universal holiness. And suppose that Spirit discharged from the body, it is no more able to do this than it was before: no power less than that which created it at first, can create any soul anew. No angel, much less any human spirit, whether in the body or out of the body, can bring one soul from darkness to light, from the power of Satan unto God. It might very possibly fright him to death, or to the belief of any speculative truth. But it could not fright him

him into spiritual life. God alone can raise those that *are dead in trespasses and sins.*

2. In order to prove more at large, that if men "hear not Moses and the Prophets neither will they be [effectually] persuaded to repent though one rose from the dead:" I will propose a use of this kind, with all the advantages that can be conceived. Suppose then one that does not *hear Moses and the Prophets*, that does not believe the Scripture to be of God, to be fast asleep in his bed, and suddenly to awake, while the clock was just striking one. He is surprized to observe the chamber as light, as if it were noon-day. He looks up and sees one whom he perfectly knew, standing at his bed side. Though a little surprized at first, he quickly recollects himself, and has the courage to ask, "Are not you my friend, who died at such a time?" He answers, I am. I am come from God, with a message to *you*. You have often wished, you could see one risen from the dead, and said, Then you *would* repent. You have your wish: and I am ordered to inform you, you are seeking death in the error of your life. If you die in the state you are in now, you will die eternally. I warn you in his name, That the Scriptures are the real word of God. That from the moment you die, you will be remarkable happy, or unspeakably miserable. That you cannot be happy hereafter, unless you are holy here, which cannot be, unless you are born again. Receive this call from God! Eternity is at hand. Repent, and believe the gospel! Having spoken these words, he vanishes away, and the room is dark as it was before.

3. One may easily believe it would be impossible for him not to be convinced for the present. He would sleep no more that night, and would as soon as possible, tell his family what he had seen and heard. Not content with this, he would be impatient to tell it to his former companions. And
probably,

probably, observing the earnestness with which he spoke, they would not then contradict him. They would say to each other, "Give him time to cool; then he will be a reasonable man again."

4. Now it is constantly found, that impressions made on the memory gradually decay: that they grow weaker and weaker in process of time, and the traces of them fainter and fainter. So it must be in this case, which his companions observing, would not fail to seize the opportunity. They would speak to this effect. "It was a strange account you gave us some time since: the more so, because we know *you* to be a sensible man, and not inclined to Enthusiasm. But perhaps you have not fully considered, how difficult it is in some cases, to distinguish our dreams from our waking thoughts. Has any one yet been able to find out an infallible Criterion between them? Is it not then possible that you may have been asleep, when this lively impression was made on your mind?" When he had been brought to think, *possibly* it might be a dream, they would soon persuade him, *probably* it was so: and not long after, to believe, *It certainly* was a dream. So little would it avail, that one came from the dead!

5. It could not be expected to be otherwise. For what was the effect which was wrought upon him?

1. He was exceedingly frightened: 2. This fright made way for a deeper conviction of the truth then declared. But 3. His heart was not changed. None

but the Almighty, could effect this. Therefore,

4. The bias of his soul was still set the wrong way: he still loved the world, and consequently wished that the Scripture was not true. How easily then, as the fright wore off, would he again believe what he wished? The conclusion then is plain and undeniable. If men "hear not Moses and the Prophets, neither will they be persuaded to repent and believe the gospel, though one rose from the dead."

6. We

6. We may add one consideration more, which brings the matter to a full issue. Before, or about the same time, that Lazarus was carried into Abraham's bosom, another Lazarus, the brother of Martha and Mary, was actually raised from the dead. But were even those who believed the fact, persuaded to repent? So far from it, that "they took counsel, to kill Lazarus," as well as his Master! Away then with the fond imagination, that those who "hear not Moses and the Prophets, would be persuaded, though one rose from the dead."

7. From the whole we may draw that general conclusion, That standing Revelation is the best means of rational conviction: far preferable to any of those extraordinary means which some imagine would be more effectual. It is therefore our wisdom, to avail ourselves of this; to make full use of it, so that it may be a lantern to our feet, and a light in all our paths. Let us take care, that our whole heart and life be conformable thereto; that it be the constant rule of all our tempers, all our words, and all our actions. So shall we preserve in all things the testimony of a good conscience toward God: and when our course is finished we too shall be *carried by angels into Abraham's bosom.*

Birmingham, March 25, 1788.

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END of the THIRD VOLUME.

